AIMful

ACCESSIBLE   INCLUSIVE   MINDFUL

Aims
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Aims Community College is committed to providing quality education for our students. Our institution continues to make substantial investments in teaching and learning. This magazine is one of those efforts. Our annual teaching and learning magazine, *Signature*, is aimed at providing information about teaching and learning strategies and highlights our important work in this area.

"The role of the Learning College at Aims Community College is to contribute and shape scenarios that empower learning through discovery, shared learning environments, and construction of knowledge."

LEARNING COLLEGE VISION STATEMENT

EDITOR'S LETTER

From Dr. Carole Brown:

Here at Aims, we are "All in." All of us share the same purpose of empowering our students and instilling in them a sense of belonging and pride of who they are, where they come from, and where they intend to go. AIMful thinking and practices elevate the quality of our relationships with students and can stem into meaningful interactions that help build strong, equitable learning communities. The last two years have made us even more aware of our students' needs. How can we, as educators and as a community of care, cater to their needs in order to bring down the barriers that might impede their learning? AIMful practices arm students with the skillset to pursue their goals with full force.

This issue of *Signature*, **AIMful**, is centered on our being accessible, inclusive, and mindful in our approach with students. **Accessible** resources erase the barriers encountered by students, leading the way to educational equity. **Inclusive** pedagogy fosters a sense of connection and community that lets students know they are valued and appreciated for their unique lived experiences. **Mindful** efforts help us practice kindness as we tailor our approaches to understand, welcome, and celebrate students' individualities.

In this issue, you will read about events that were hosted by our colleagues to celebrate accessibility or work towards equitable and inclusive instruction. You will also embark on a journey into the classroom with several of our faculty to learn about the various ways in which they bring mindfulness of the students' needs into their teaching approach. By infusing AIMful practices into their curriculum and using creativity to spice up the student experience, they are setting the stage for students to feel a sense of belonging in the Aims community. I hope you enjoy this issue of AIMful!

Sincerely,

Carole

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2022 ISSUE

GAAD:
An Aimful Event

by Allison Easley | English & Literature Professor

With another successful academic year behind us, and with four-day workweeks and summer vacations beckoning, about 50 staff, faculty, and administrators came together on May 19, 2022, to celebrate Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD). This event on the Greeley campus marked the first time the College had formally participated in GAAD, "a global event that shines a light on digital access and inclusion for people with disabilities." For this project, Disability Access Services and Learning Environments partnered across divisions to plan the event, with additional support from the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, Center for Professional Development, Human Resources, and Marketing. As Learning Experience Designer Cheryl Comstock described afterward, "I had an amazing time engaging with everyone who worked to help me pull the event together." In turn, the half-day conference featuring welcoming remarks, seven sessions on topics of accessibility and technology, hands-on lab time for application, and a communal lunch at the Bistro, represented another first at Aims: an onsite conference, apart from Conversation Day, explicitly for both staff and faculty.

In this way, the GAAD conference embodies the theme for this edition of Signature: accessible, inclusive, and mindful—Aimful. First, Aims employees learned how to use accessibility tools to "erase the barriers encountered by students, leading the way to educational equity." This inaugural GAAD conference featured sessions by Aims experts on the redesigned accessible Aims website; the Bb Ally accessibility tool used by students and faculty in D2L course shells; Yuja video capture and captions; the notetaking software Glean; Read&Write text-to-speech software, which has been offered at the College for many years; Grackle, a tool to check accessibility in Google documents; and WebAIM, the starting place for learning how to make common documents accessible. According to Laura Killen-Wing, a full-time faculty member in Early Childhood Education, "I enjoyed becoming familiar with various tools that we can provide students in order to help them find success as a student."

Second, attendees also experienced inclusiveness at GAAD, as a professional development opportunity designed with the needs and availabilities of both staff and faculty in mind. The silos that can develop in a workplace as large and diverse as Aims mean that many employees across campus don't often work, let alone, learn together. However, as Jan Cope, the Director of Professional Development describes, "The GAAD event was excellent, it was so great for Faculty and Staff to be together for this college-wide event!" Lastly, our learning at GAAD gave attendees the opportunity to be mindful, reflecting on what we still need to learn and want to improve. In one such reflection, Business and CIS Programs Chair and Interim Dean Ellen Sweiter noted that "Keeping an awareness of access in the forefront of your mind when you are creating documents will make the process easier." Such insights and awareness develop through a commitment to ongoing education, which we are lucky to have at our Learning College.

How can you become more accessible in your work or classroom? Take the WebAIM training offered for both faculty and staff; add Bb Ally in your D2L course shells before it becomes standard in Spring 2023; reach out to the Learning Environments team, Disability Access Services, and the LRTs in the Learning Commons for answers and ongoing support; and stay tuned for a second GAAD conference in 2023. ⑤

> "I enjoyed becoming familiar with various tools that we can provide students in order to help them find success as a student."
>
> **LAURA KILLEN-WING**

A Beginning Teachers' Guide for Creating Community in Online Classes

by Dr. Pam Lundeberg

IN online classes, it can be challenging to build a learning community and ensure deep engagement with course content (as well as open discourse surrounding subject matter). Building a community of learners is invaluable, though, and can aid in inspiring students to grapple with challenging content in a meaningful way. In my own endeavors teaching Human Sexuality online, I strive to structure every course in a way that fosters student connection and facilitates students' self-assessment. Accordingly, I offer these two simple—but effective—teaching tips!

Tip # 1: Humanize Yourself!

In my courses, especially my Human Sexuality course, I strive to create a community of online learners by humanizing myself as much as possible. Creating a warm, open, supportive environment allows students to truly engage with and explore the content, which fosters richer understanding of these very important concepts (for a review of award-winning online teaching practices, including fostering instructor presence and connectedness, see Martin et al., 2019).

Humanizing yourself in the learning community also inspires personal connection (i.e., students get to know one another and feel comfortable engaging in healthy discourse). I work hard to foster an environment in which students are comfortable sharing their personal experiences within these topic areas. Much of the content in Human Sexuality is a little "spicy" (as I call it!) — meaning it can be personal, difficult, and/or awkward content (for example, topics like gender and sexuality, contraception and abortion, sexually transmitted infections, and sexual disorders are all included in a college-level Human Sexuality course). While this content can be uncomfortable, is also incredibly important and useful content that is so relevant and applicable to students' lives, so creating an environment in which students are open to learning and sharing is crucial!

Here are some tips that you can use to humanize yourself in your courses and encourage your students to be open to exploring content (even if it might be zesty!):

- Ensure that your instructor presence is high, and allow your personality to shine through! For example, post videos in which students can see/hear you, write announcements and assignment feedback in your "tone" (i.e., let students see that you are a unique human who is invested in their learning), and don't be afraid to participate in the discussion yourself! Additionally, ensure that your feedback is prompt and personalized—student participation is improved by timely and specific feedback (Shea, Li, & Pickett, 2006).

- Encourage student participation by embodying the big three: be (1) open, (2) encouraging, and (3) supportive. Sharing in an online class can feel intimidating for students, so be sure to foster an open and supportive environment that rewards students for connecting with content in a meaningful way. Let students know when you are appreciative of their engagement, and offer positive reinforcement for meaningful participation (for example, thank students for engaging with the content so openly and comment on specific items to remind students that you care about their participation and are interested in engaging with them). Again, offer this reinforcement in a timely manner so that students are swiftly rewarded for their thoughtful participation!

Tip #2: Don't get Testy...Embrace Low-Stakes Formative Quizzes!

Instructors can balk at the idea of including more tests or quizzes, but a wealth of research supports more frequent, lower-stakes opportunities for students to engage in "retrieval practice" to promote understanding of material. This strategy is referred to as "the testing effect," which is a well-established phenomenon demonstrating that taking tests/quizzes during the learning phase enhances later retrieval of the same material (for a meta-analysis, see Schwieren et al., 2017). Including weekly quizzes capitalizes on the testing effecting's benefit and also gives students a chance to gauge their own understanding of the material before they get to higher-stakes assignments (e.g., unit exams).

Here are some ideas of how to include low-stakes quizzes in your class:

- Use weekly quizzes to ensure that students understand core content (e.g., theories, fundamental concepts, etc.) before they are asked to apply it.

- As the name implies, low-stakes quizzes should be low-stake. (I.e., each quiz should not carry a significant amount of weight toward a student's grade.)

- Consider opting for *mastery quizzes*—quizzes that allow students unlimited attempts rather than a finite number – so that students can use the quizzes as a learning opportunity and can choose to attempt the quiz multiple times until they achieve the grade they want.

  » Relatedly, if you do opt for mastery quizzes, I would recommend setting up a test bank with an abundance of questions so that each attempt presents a different quiz (rather than simply being the same quiz over and over again). For example, if you set up a 10-question quiz, I would suggest having a test bank with at least 20 questions so that students are discouraged from "cheating the system" (e.g., simply memorizing answers) and are instead fully benefiting from the opportunity to engage with mastery quizzes.

- Be open with students about the reasoning for including quizzes. In my classes, I explain to students that quizzes offer an incredibly beneficial learning opportunity (i.e., I explain the testing effect in simple terms) so that students see the value of completing weekly quizzes.

Although very different, these two teaching tips both involve students engaging with and applying course material (i.e., discussing, examining, identifying, and analyzing). Furthermore, they help in creating a community of learners who are comfortable and empowered to tackle content in an effort that facilitates achieving the course outcomes! By applying these teaching techniques, I have found increased student engagement that includes more openness, more questions, more personal application, and more in-depth reflection. I have also been pleased to see higher tests scores and have enjoyed students informing me that the included lower-stakes quizzes helped them gauge their own learning and better prepare for examinations (thereby resulting in higher exam scores). I encourage you to try out these tips in your classes too—I think you'll be as inspired and impressed by your students as I am with mine! *S*

When "Teaching to the Test" is a Good Thing

by Dr. Cerisa Reynolds

WHY do we test our students? Is it to see what they really know? To penalize them for not having memorized certain facts? To reward those who did memorize the "right things"?

Ideally, we aren't testing students just because we feel like our classes need tests. Instead, we are striving to test students on key information or skills we want or need them to get from the class. A test focused on this information would therefore give us a chance to see how well we taught crucial details and to see how many of our students are "getting it," enabling us to return to specific topics as necessary. These tests should also be integral parts of the learning process, as we ask students to dive deeper into the content while they study, while they reveal their knowledge through taking the tests, and by reflecting upon and returning to this new knowledge throughout the rest of the semester.

Too often, though, tests are crafted with the assumption that very few students (only the "exceptional students") will get high scores. Too often, they are viewed as tools that can penalize students who "didn't try hard enough," study long enough, or come to class as often as they should have. Tests—when thought of in this way—should have a small number of As and Bs and a hefty number of Cs, Ds, and Fs. High C-F rates can—within this approach—be framed as an indication that students just aren't focused or are "underprepared." Now, certainly, this may be true...

But what if we entered the classroom assuming that most of our students *would* and *should* get As and Bs on a specific exam, not because the exam was easy, but because we had invested the time and energy into helping students learn the content so well, students would practically have to try to fail. What happens when that becomes our goal?

And if we are truly testing students on content or skills we think they need to have mastered in our classes, shouldn't a staggeringly high pass rate be our goal?

Here, I'll explore what this approach has looked like in one of my courses: Forensic Anthropology, a course where students must have a strong understanding of human osteology.[1] To practice forensic anthropology, students need to be able to identify the individual bones of the human skeleton, they need to be able to determine whether certain bones came from the left or right side of the body, and they need to be able to identify dozens of features and sutures on those bones. All of this knowledge needs to be developed towards the very beginning of the semester since they will spend the bulk of the semester a) working with skeletal casts learning how to identify different aspects of the biological profile (including ancestry, sex, age, and stature), and b) learning how to identify the various ways in which disease, activity loads, occupation, and trauma impact the skeleton. A strong understanding of human osteology serves as the foundation upon which all of this knowledge builds. A strong understanding of human osteology enables students to look at a femur with evidence of blunt force trauma and focus on the evidence of blunt force trauma rather than spending time and energy trying to determine which bone they are looking at or which words they should use to describe the part of the bone that was altered by trauma.

In short, I don't just *want* my students to have a strong familiarity with the human skeleton. To learn deeply and efficiently throughout the rest of the semester and to succeed in the class, students *need* a strong familiarity with the skeleton. As such, three weeks into the semester, my Forensics students take the only exam of the semester (the "Osteology Exam"), wherein they need to be able to successfully identify (and successfully spell) more than 100 bones, features, sutures, and landmarks of the human skeleton. This is a truly difficult exam. And I proctor it hoping that most of my students will ace it.

My approach to teaching osteology has evolved. When I first started teaching courses that include large osteology components, I quickly realized that I was dissatisfied with the approach that had been modeled for me: have students read a chapter about human osteology, lecture students about the skeleton, give students a short class period to look at the bones, and then test them. Then, the final piece of this sequence: assume students are at fault for not studying hard enough when most of them don't get As or Bs.

As soon as I realized I didn't want to take this approach, I decided to give students ample supplemental resources and ample time with skeletal materials. Because if we really need our students to be familiar with the skeleton to succeed in this class, they will need *lots* of support and *lots* of time *with skeletal materials*.[2]

Over the years, I have given students an increasing amount of time with skeletal materials, and their test scores have likewise increased with each semester. These days, Forensic Anthropology students are given four full class sessions rotating through stations (e.g., "crania station," "vertebrae station," etc.) to spend time with skeletal materials while they learn how to identify the various bones, features, sutures, and landmarks of the human skeleton that may show up on their Osteology Exam.

> ❝
> **Research suggests that study aids that require students to repeatedly retrieve information are essential to deep learning."**

After these four class sessions, students take the exam, wherein they move through different stations (each of which has several bones) at timed intervals. Within a short amount of time, they are expected to successfully identify and write out the names of a random collection of the bones and features they have spent the previous two weeks learning about. Again, this is not an easy exam.

Student Resources

Prior to starting the osteology section, students are given a list of what they will need to know for "The Osteology Exam." Their required textbook has a chapter on the human skeleton that serves as a guide, and a module on the course shell contains optional resources including open access anatomy textbooks and links to videos, games, and anatomy coloring guides. Detailed guides to certain parts of the skeleton, guides on how to determine left from right for specific bones, and a study sheet specific to the carpals are also provided.

Until Spring 2020 when the pandemic moved courses to Zoom or online, students were also given worksheets that they needed to complete while at each station. These worksheets consisted of images of one or more bones with prompts asking them to locate and label several features, sutures, and/or landmarks. Though the worksheets required students to work together and find the answers, the large number of items on each page kept them from serving as ideal study aids. Additionally, in previous semesters, some students said they spent more time working on the worksheets (which needed to be turned in) than actually studying for the exam. The optional study aids provided on the course shell (as described above) seemed to help some students, but the required part—the worksheets— were less useful.

So what might be more helpful? Research suggests that study aids that require students to repeatedly retrieve information are essential to deep learning (Brown et al. 2014), and well-made flashcards can be such a tool. Additionally, and not surprisingly, many students who aced the test in previous semesters had made and used their own flashcards. However, this requires students to have an understanding of the benefit of using flashcards and have the excess time and resources necessary to make adequate osteology flashcards. To give all of my students the benefit of this method, I created partially completed flashcards for most of the content they needed to learn for the exam. These flashcards have images and prompts on one side but are blank on the other.

Students were given the flashcards to work on with each other at the appropriate stations and were asked to write the answers on the back of the cards. (In other words, they were not given all of the flashcards at once. Instead, they were, for example, only given the flashcards focusing on the skull after they had completed a few tasks at the skull station.) Cards were numbered and an answer sheet was provided afterwards to make sure they studied the correct answers. The value of retrieval practice was also described and discussed with the students. Replacing the worksheets with partially completed flashcards that students could

interact with and could really use as a study aid appeared to substantially improve student test scores, with the average rising from 71% to 83%. Additionally, as can be seen in Figure 1, there was an increase in the percentage of students who earned an 80% or above and a decrease in the percentage of students who earned a 79% or below. This would suggest that the flashcards provided the students with a focused way to successfully learn the desired content.

A few additional changes have occurred since Spring 2020, most notably that Forensic Anthropology is now a 4 credit natural sciences class rather than a 3 credit social sciences course. As such, since time-in-class has more than doubled, students now have twice as many hours with the skeletal casts during their four class sessions than students did in the past. Additionally, during Spring 2022, a virtual version of the exam was made available to students through D2L. This exam, which pulls 50 questions from a 100 question question bank, requires them to look at images and identify a bone, feature, or suture within 30 seconds. Students could take this up to four times, with their highest score earning them up to 1% extra credit in the class. (In this case, a 100% would earn you 1% extra credit, 90% .9, etc.). Given the extra time with skeletal materials, the flashcards, the practice exams, and the additional/optional resources available on D2L, students in the Spring 2022 class had an average score of 96%!
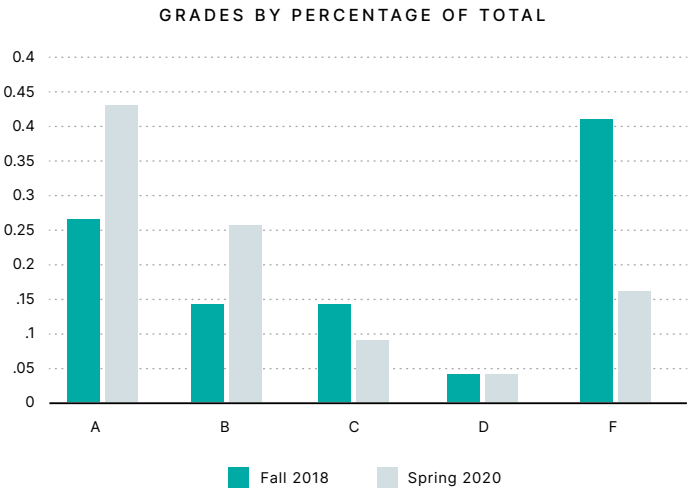

GRADES BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL

Figure 1: Grades by percentage of total for Fall 2018 and Spring 2020. (The course was not offered during intervening semesters). (Reynolds 2020)

And the benefits of this extend beyond exam scores. With each semester's rising exam scores, student comprehension

throughout the rest of the semester also grows. Students are able to focus on the new analytical methods we explore each week rather than being bogged down by needing to re-familiarize themselves with the skeleton itself.

This approach is very time and—especially at first—energy intensive. It requires making substantial efforts to give students in-class time (which might mean adjusting the course schedule and spending less time on other topics) as well as finding or making resources that are useful to students within and outside of the classroom. It also requires us to modify or replace resources that don't seem to work as well as we had intended. This approach has massive payoffs, though, as it enables students to learn the course content more deeply, preparing them for subsequent topics later in the semester or in future classes and careers, something students have expressed recognizing all on their own.

And on a personal level, thinking of exams as learning tools that students are prepared to tackle rather than as exercises of a penalizing nature has been revolutionary. I have long watched colleagues in fields like the health sciences glow when sharing their students' high pass rates on required state and national exams, and I am thrilled to have found a way to reach similar results in one of my own classes. And the best part: we can all work to achieve this! What a world that would be! 🅂

Portions of this article were previously presented at the 2020 TAP Into Learning Faculty Conference (Reynolds 2020)

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[1] Human osteology is also important in Biological Anthropology, but makes up less of a focus of the entire course. As such, a similar but less intensive approach to that described here is often taken in that class.

[2] Note that all human skeletal materials used in Anthropology courses at Aims are casts obtained from reputable educational companies. Aims Anthropology students do not work with real human remains in our courses.

DIGGING INTO YELLOWDIG:

An Interdisciplinary Group of Faculty Pilot a New Platform to Help Build Community and Spark Engagement with Students Virtually

by Francie Rottini and Denise Pearson

A re you interested in trying a completely different (and creative) approach to online discussions? A small group of faculty from a variety of disciplines (e.g., AAA, Anthropology, Biology, Business, Developmental English, Education, Literature, Math, and Psychology) said yes to this question and piloted Yellowdig, a gamified social media-like online discussion platform, in their classes during the spring 2022 semester. They were curious to see if Yellowdig would be more effective in building community and sparking engagement with online students than a traditional online discussion board. Piloting this new platform was especially timely, given the disruption of social connections that have directly and indirectly affected loneliness and belonging-ness among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Haikalis et al., 2021).

YELLOWDIG OVERVIEW

What is Yellowdig?
Yellowdig is an online learning platform that leverages an understanding of human behavior and gameful technology to build healthy online learning communities. This unique discussion platform integrates with the D2L Course Management System and looks similar to a social media news interface using gamification dimensions with the aim of sustaining engagement and motivating student participation. Unlike traditional online discussions where students respond to the same prompt or instructor-led prompts, the Yellowdig platform design empowers students to drive the discussion on anything that they feel relates to the course content.

What is the student's role?
Students write posts directed to their classmates rather than the instructor, which positions them in the role of co-creator of knowledge and becomes the foundation for how community among peers is built. Rather than answer questions, write mini-essays, or give the instructor what they are looking for, students begin to have a genuine conversation with each other.

Students have a choice in how they participate in Yellowdig discussions. For example, as they can earn points for creating new threads, commenting on a post, receiving a reaction to their post or response, as well as receiving accolades from the instructor. Because students earn points from reactions and responses to their posts, they are motivated to create more relevant and interesting conversations that draw in their classmates to earn their points faster. This "game-based" magic makes the product so attractive and effective for students. Students earn points for their participation, which are divided into "earning periods." These earning periods are not meant to be rigid start and stop points for conversation, but rather windows of opportunity to earn points for their engagement. Once an earning period has passed, students cannot go back and make up those points. However, they can earn buffer points that can help with their overall grade as well as offset weeks that perhaps lacked a bit of engagement.

What does the instructor do?
Instructors, as part of the community, guide the conversations and flow by creating the topics (or themes) that students will attach to their posts. Also, instructors can ask questions, make comments, and most importantly give accolades to exceptionally thoughtful posts and responses. The immediacy and validation to a student by providing a reaction (emoji) or awarding an accolade, provides positive reinforcement and encourages continued interaction.

Ultimately, students engage in semester-long conversations that ebb and flow, organically around course content and topics. The pedagogical principles that govern classroom discussion such as decentralizing student conversations, sharing facilitating roles with students, utilizing prompts strategically and increasing student authority in discussions, are also used to govern Yellowdig discussions (Toro, 2021). Therefore, the instructor's role is to broaden and facilitate conversations, rather than drive or constrain them

Why does it work?
The magic of the platform combines excellent online pedagogy approaches and behavioral psychology strategies. Using the tenets of the Community of Inquiry model or framework, Yellowdig utilizes approaches to learning that fuse the individual construction of meaning with the collaborative validation of understanding, also referred to as collaborative-constructivist learning experiences, through the enhancement of social presence in the online environment. Research has shown there is a relationship between the three independent elements of presence (social, teaching, and cognitive), perceived learning

satisfaction, course and instructor satisfaction, actual learning, and sense of belonging (Akyol & Garrison, 2008).

Social Presence: The design of Yellowdig encourages more open communication and risk-free expression from students, different from what generally occurs with overly structured instructor led-prompts. Instructors can motivate and encourage student participation with their responses, reactions and accolades. This helps students to feel that their instructor is "real."

Cognitive Presence: Yellowdig is designed for students to drive the conversation and encourage shared experiences. This changes the role of the instructor to be a contributor, rather than the primary audience which happens in traditional online discussions. They can post comments to student posts that help connect ideas and guide students to make applications and share their knowledge as a content expert in a responsive manner.

Teaching Presence: The instructor establishes the topics for discussion and can provide suggestions for what students might choose to post about which might include asking questions, posting insights they have had, and sharing helpful resources.They can help online discussions complement direct instruction in the course such as lectures or readings.

Recently, Online Education Services (OES), an online program management company, published a case study that provided many robust findings related to students who are at risk and the benefits of being part of a community. The students observed in their study used Yellowdig to build meaningful interpersonal connections that created a sense of community, eased their anxieties around their studies, and set them up for academic success (OES, 2021).

SPRING 2022 PILOT

During the spring 2022 semester, eight instructors teaching 16 sections with approximately 320 students enrolled piloted Yellowdig in their classes, in place of using traditional D2L discussions. Throughout this pilot, faculty were able to work together as a small group with the vendor, share resources, and collect qualitative data and feedback from their students about their communities. Overall, the faculty who used the platform saw a significant difference in the engagement and community building in each of their classes.

The pilot data found that 100% of faculty surveyed stated their students performed better or the same using the Yellowdig discussion platform than using the traditional D2L

discussion tool, with 75% stating they felt their students performed better. And 100% of the faculty surveyed in the pilot stated they felt their students enjoyed using the Yellowdig platform more than D2L discussions.

In addition to faculty indicating there were positive outcomes associated with using Yellowdig in their courses, many students also shared the benefits of using this platform. Students have shared how the platform helps online discussions feel more like having a *genuine conversation*. They can start conversations that are meaningful to them, share information, ask questions, and receive responses and reactions from their classmates and instructor. Here are a couple of themes with student comments:

BUILDING COMMUNITY

"I loved the Yellowdig discussions. I had one other online course this semester and did not feel like I really connected with any of the other students. Yellowdig helped me to achieve that **connection with other students** and to learn more about them, even though it was through a screen. It also helped to read through other people's questions and the responses to them. Sometimes, it was **questions that I never even knew I had but wanted an answer to**."
— *AAA 109 student*

"I'll admit that I was skeptical of Yellowdig at first because I am so used to D2L discussions, but I prefer to do Yellowdig instead. The discussion process has allowed a lot of us the **freedom to talk amongst each other** with a continuation of past conversations coming back up as we progress and think of new things. From the very beginning I felt Yellowdig really **brought us all together** and these discussions feel like I'm talking with people I've known for years." — *PSY student*

"I absolutely loved Yellowdig — I had a really wonderful experience connecting with the other students, encouraging them, seeing similar struggles. It was really helpful while working and attending college from home, **to not feel so lonely**." — *AAA 109 student*

"I felt like we really took the time to hear each other's experiences, opinions, and understanding. It felt like we were trying **to learn the info together** by showcasing different diseases or processes." — *BIO 201 student*.

"I loved Yellowdig. I enjoyed being able to feel like I was connecting on a deeper level with my classmates as compared to the regular discussion posts which feel so forced because of the way they are structured. I enjoyed how **it felt more of a personal chat** rather than the typical "I like what you said in this post." — *AAA 109 student*

ENGAGING WITH THE CLASS CONTENT

"It gave me more insight into more **real-life aspects of anatomy**. I felt like I was able to see more clinical applications of it from all of the different articles people shared. Some people even shared YouTube videos explaining the concepts in more depth which was helpful."
— *BIO 201 student*

"Yellowdig discussion posts are AWESOME because we can post topics that **actually interest us**, rather than a topic that we don't really care about." — *AAA 109 student*

"I have really enjoyed using Yellowdig ... I think that it is a less stressful and more fun way to participate in discussions, and I have found the **conversations on this platform to flow better** than they do within D2L discussions. I also enjoyed having the option to give smaller reactions to posts through the emoji reactions and **having more freedom in terms of what topics have been open for discussion**."
— *LIT 205 student*

"**I found myself excited to find posts that related to the material. I'd be watching the lecture videos and I would think, "Oooh I want to research this more!"**
— *BIO 201 student*

"Our (Yellowdig) discussions have been so fun. I love working with others and going back and forth to **share ideas and offer different insights**." — *EDU 221 student*

ENJOYING THE CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION STYLE

"I liked how we could discuss things with our classmates with a platform that was more familiar to this generation. I liked how it was **open-ended**." — *EDU 221 student*

"I like Yellowdig a lot better than what I have used in the past. It seems to be much more user-friendly and similar to social media platforms that I already use. I thought it was a great way to do the discussions for this class!" — *LIT 205 student*

"I loved being able to react and use emojis; it **made interacting with my classmates feel less forced**."
— *BIO 201 student*

"I really enjoyed the reaction emojis too. I thought it was an interesting way of earning points. And, I enjoyed how it **allowed interaction from everyone** even if they did not choose to comment." — *LIT 205 student*

"I feel that it has **more inclusion** and doesn't make talking with other students so restrictive. I think that because it's in the social media format, that we can use it easily and like it better because so much of our communication is done through social media now." — *EDU 221 student*

Although this is only the first semester the tool has been used in courses at Aims Community College, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from both faculty and students is quite promising. As we move out of the initial pilot phase, Aims Community College joins other institutions such as Arizona State University, Capella University, and the University of Vermont, and looks to expand the benefits of this platform to other faculty who are interested in seeing if this product is right for their students and discipline. The Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (FTLC) is providing training, resources, and other support pieces for interested faculty. For as long as online courses have been around, the priority has been boosting the level of engagement in virtual classes so why not see if this online learning platform will work for you! *S*

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Using Excel/Google Sheets to Help Students Track Progress Throughout the Semester

by Dan Van der Vieren

TWO students start talking one day about their struggles across the last fifteen weeks in their math class. They are about to take the final exam for the course, which is worth 20% of the overall grade. One student shares, "This class has been tough! I have a 65% right now. I really need to pass this class to graduate and keep my financial aid. I hope I can pull it off!" The other student, embarrassed, responds, "I have a 62%. But maybe I can study enough to pass with a 70%. I have all night to study. Let's try our best!"

The next day they take their exam, but unfortunately, neither passes. The student with the 65% actually had a chance— mathematically speaking—to pass the class. However, this student needed at least a 90% on the final to earn a C. The second individual would have needed a final exam score of 102%, unfortunately, impossible without an extra credit opportunity.

Often at the college level, it is believed that students are responsible for their own actions and that their decisions will have natural consequences. Individuals who don't want to waste money, delay their graduation, or accept defeat will stay in a class past the withdrawal date—even until the end—thinking there is still hope of passing, despite the hard evidence against this. Can instructors influence students like these by giving anything that would prevent such inevitable failure?

After witnessing several occasions in my time teaching community college students like the ones in the anecdote above, I began to reflect on the circumstances and came to two realizations. The first is that it might be better for students if we as instructors were to integrate a grading scheme using accumulated total points rather than weighted averages. The latter seems relatively common based on conversations I have had with colleagues in the mathematics department. The second move would be to share in a more transparent and clear manner how grades are calculated for a course beyond the percent breakdown stated in the syllabus. These two strategies in conjunction have the potential to solve this dilemma by providing students with the information necessary to make informed decisions prior to the deadline to withdraw. Moreover, it may be possible

that students would become motivated and empowered to track their own progress and in the end, earn an A or a B.

Let us return for a moment to the students' scores. If they were to be calculated with cumulative points, the two would have 520 and 496 out of 800, respectively, if the total for the course was set at 1000 points. Knowing that a passing grade requires 700 points to pass, it would be a matter of a simple subtraction exercise to see the required scores on the final exam to successfully finish the course. With knowledge like this, students would be able to "plan ahead" and track personal progress much more easily. For example, if an individual has already worked through half the class and earned 360 points, they would need to earn 340 more to land at a minimum of 700. (Notice how this is different than saying, "I need an AVERAGE of 68% on the remaining assignments.")

This reality, however, is not always taken into consideration; students will often look at a percentage and perhaps use that information to make a decision to withdraw prematurely from the course or alternatively, take it as a motivating factor ("If I have a 60% going into the final, I just need at least an 80% on the final to get a C in the course"—which is highly unlikely.

With all this in mind, I thought it would be helpful for students if I created a spreadsheet for my college trigonometry course to track such progress. I incorporated several formulas that used information from the various cells to calculate a final grade based on an accumulated percentage. Next to the actual grades for the assignments, I placed a "what if" column for homework and a similar row for the exams (an aesthetic decision). This allowed students to project scores on future assignments to predict a final grade based on current data. So, hypothetically, a student could enter in all of his or her grades up to the last graded assignment and then place all 100 percent scores for the remaining assignments to see a final grade, labeled in the light blue cell in the spreadsheet.

Once it came to my attention that the students in another one of my classes, College Algebra, were falling behind because they were not able to tell which assignments were due and how much more work was necessary to finish with a

	Actual Score	"What If" Score	Actual: Homework (20%)
Chapter P (100)	86	90	84.5
1.1 (10)	9	10	What If:
1.2 (10)	8	10	Homework (20%)
1.3 (10)	8	10	92.4
1.4 (10)	8	10	
1.5 (10)	9	10	
1.6 (10)	10	10	
1.7 (10)	9	9	
1.8 (10)	9	9	

			Overall Percentage	
Actual	Homework %	84.5	72.7	%
	Exam %	67.6		
	Project %	70		
	Mini Final %	75		
			Overall Percentage	
"What If"	Homework %	92.4	84.5	%
	Exam %	81.6		
	Project %	80		
	Mini Final %	86		

Figure 1: Sample spreadsheet students can access to calculate what they need to earn the grade they are aiming for.

Celebrating Hands-on Arts-based Experiential Learning

by Kris Heintz-Nelson

If you use a mobile device or computer to search the internet or turn on the television for news or entertainment, you will probably agree that our world is filled with visual images, cultural symbols, and verbal and non-verbal signs. How can we teach our students to pause, decode, and make sense of the layered complexity they see and experience? Careful observation, analytic interpretation, and thoughtful evaluation are learned skills required across academic disciplines and professions. This is true of a visual or performing artist attending to the details of their practice, medical professionals identifying symptoms to diagnose a patient, scientists astutely noting the results of an experiment, and police officers as they investigate a scene. In each of these instances, visual literacy and communication is required. In this brief article, I will share how I have utilized inquiry and experiential activities to challenge and empower students to pause, observe, critically think, and communicate what they see.

My art appreciation class at Aims Community College is an entry-level, guaranteed pathway Liberal Art Core course. The enrolled population is diverse, so a few students may come with a rich background and confidence in speaking about the arts. However, for the vast majority, the subject is unfamiliar, unknown, and thus can be intimidating. For many students, this introductory course will be their only opportunity to study the arts. I admittedly have a bias; I believe the arts are interdisciplinary and provide a key to understanding the human story of time, place, and culture. My goal is that students learn enduring and transferrable understandings; and that is to carefully observe, ask their own questions, investigate assumptions, and support their statements with reasons, evidence, and provide rationale.

To achieve this, I seek to provide students with meaningful opportunities to look, describe and articulate what they see. However, most educators may agree, that prompting students to freely speak about an unfamiliar

particular grade, I began a project for the progress tracking. The system I had been using to grade made sense to me, but I believe that it wasn't so clear to the students. The clarity arrived with another spreadsheet I designed. The list of skills to practice were all labeled next to a recording column. This is where students could type in their score and the cell would immediately change to a color based on a conditional formatting scheme. A perfect score of a 100, for instance, changed the cell to purple, while a score of 1-39 changed the cell to red. This visual cued the students to work on certain skills over others. An additional component that helped students monitor their advancement was an embedded formula that calculated the number of modules needed to complete per day that would make it possible to finish all to a level of passing, given a specified interval of time (the student would enter "today's date" and the "end-of-semester date" to automatically fill the calculated number of remaining skills).

Today's Date: 8/18/22	End of Semester: 12/15/22		
	Number of Skills (<50) Per Day to Finish On Time		1.40336
GRADE:			
115	Number of Skills: (100)		1
105-114	Number of Skills: (90-99)		1
100	Number of Skills: (80-89)		10
90-99	Number of Skills: (70-79)		10
70-89	Number of Skills: (50-69)		20
0	Number of Skills: (<50)		0
0	Number of Skills:		167
			209

Figure 2

Immediately, there were mixed emotions. "Wow!" one student said. "I really need to pick up the pace to finish by the end of the semester!" Another student exclaimed, "This is awesome. Now I can see how many [skills] I need to work on each day to meet my goal."

Many of the students in both classes took advantage of the "what if" component and entered hypothetical scores to see what they needed for a certain grade.

The D2L grade book that Aims instructors use has features that many may not consider. Do you do any of the following: 1) use a weighted grading system, 2) drop ungraded items, or 3) display grade scheme colors? I would still argue that we change our grading system to operate on points and that we have ungraded items graded as "0's" until they are completed. The third component related to colors within D2L is a way for the instructor to recognize when a student has missed an assignment or completed one at a level below passing (these change the cells to red and orange, respectively).

Many students prefer to know their status when it comes to grades, especially if they are needing to maintain a certain GPA for scholarships, financial aid, or personal reasons. With the assistance of a supplemental worksheet that is aligned to a point-based grading scheme, instructors may be able to motivate students to do their personal best in a new way.

Since creating one's own tool to track student progress like the ones mentioned here can take the time that many of us don't have, I would love the opportunity to help anyone interested in designing a similar spreadsheet to provide students with tracking academic progress. It can be intimidating if you haven't worked much past the basic functionalities of Excel or Google Sheets, so please feel free to contact me at daniel.vandervieren@aims.edu with any inquiries about this.

Together, we can bring about more positive change with our students and perhaps catalyze improvements in their grades and level of engagement! **S**

subject in a new environment can be daunting. I am pleased to share how I have incorporated Philip Yenawine's, *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*[1] as a technique to encourage students to freely speak, share and communicate Visual thinking strategies (VTS) as a concept is a rather simple, draws upon students observation and experience, and shifts the emphasis from the instructor as the source of empirical knowledge. VTS invites inquiry as the students are the ones who create meaning. The process simply starts by showing students a visual art image. This can be an image from history or contemporary art, and have them silently observe for several minutes, from there an asks three questions.

1) What's going on in this picture? 2) What do you see that makes you say that? 3) What more can we find?

You may ask, *"Do I need to start with an image from visual art?"* The answer, according to Philip Yenawine and one that my own experience validates, is a resounding YES!

Initiating VTS with visual art provides a rich opening and naturally invites a variety of interpretations and discourse. The subjects of art often reflect universal human experiences and interdisciplinary concerns related to story, history, power, politics, economics, identity, technology, materials, and beliefs. The arts are layered with nuanced symbols, allegory, and metaphor, and reflect the time, place and context from which they sprang. The simple line of questioning VTS offers provides opportunities for students to develop their skills of observation, and gain experience and confidence as critical, creative, and dialogical thinkers.[2] When students share their observations, they often differ from their peers, providing a chance to hear and embrace alternate, divergent, and contradictory perspectives.

It is important to allow students enough time to quietly look at the work provided. If you are looking for free, fair use resources, I recommend utilizing images from PBS ART:21 and/or The National Gallery of Art (Uncovering America), both of which provide free, fair use images and resources for educators. The students should have time to examine the work in silence: no talking with one another, no prompting, simply looking. Then the instructor starts, by asking *"What's going on in this picture?"*

As students volunteer information, the instructor should physically point, and verbally paraphrase what has been said. Philip Yenawine calls this visual paraphrasing, which twofold provides the students an opportunity to confirm you understood them and helps to keep student eyes focused on the subject. The second question, *"What do you see that makes you say that"* gently encourages students to provide evidence for what they say. If several students share a similar idea, the instructor can validate the shared experience, or if disparate ideas are offered, the instructor can help link incongruent contributions together. The activity continues by asking *"what more can we find?"* Here is where students will build and expand on what has been offered, or respectfully disagree.

The activity seems simple, but it is nuanced and layered. The freedom to speak, to paraphrase, and link, allows students to embrace contradiction and reaffirms that there are multiple ways of looking and knowing. With practice, students freely share their experiences to fuel the discussions, naturally making connections to other subjects they are studying, places they have been, or personal narratives. To close the VTS activity, Yenawine suggests that the teachers summarize what has been said and thank the participants, further honoring their contributions. The objective is not whether students "got it right." Critical thinking in this context isn't about right or wrong, but about inspiring mindful observation, making connections, providing evidence, identifying themes, relating to what they know, and hearing alternative perspectives. The more opportunities students can practice this activity, the more confident, and more engaged they become. I begin utilizing this practice on the first day of the semester, and throughout the semester, take note of how students grow in their confidence, applying learned vocabulary terms, identifying themes, and overarching concepts. Within the first few weeks of the semester, students will naturally expound upon their original

statements, "I see this... because...." Providing evidence regarding their observations becomes a natural part of the dialogue.[3]

Visual Thinking Strategies and experiential learning help create the classroom expectation that all are welcome to contribute in a safe, equitable, and democratic environment. It also helps to move learning beyond rote memorization of names, dates and facts, and draws upon their own lived experiences and "funds" of knowledge. Without prompting, students begin to build on their classmates' observations agreeing with a stated perspective or respectfully disagreeing. I have witnessed shy students build the confidence to speak and marginalized individuals empowered to share their experiences with their peers. Together the students work to construct a culture of civility within the classroom.[4]

To further support student learning in conjunction with implementing visual thinking strategies, I have also incorporated experiential hands-on arts-based activities. Arts-based research is a hybrid form of action research which is based in the hands-on learning of arts processes.[5] This form of qualitative research is a layered process which offers students an opportunity to take risk, experiment, and visualize their ideas. Such opportunities continue to provide a space for critical dialogue as students can utilize the visual arts to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions.[6] An interesting transfer occurs as the VTS questions become ingrained with the students, they can transfer the skill to articulate what they see with different media/materials/binders, how their experience connects with the ideas, culture, and history they have been learning (see Figures 1 and 2). Hands-on experiential arts-based opportunities include making recycled paper, experimenting with diverse drawing and painting media, exploring printmaking processes, and sculpting with clay, all of which produce joyful learning opportunities which further build confidence for taking risks, sharing their experience, and enhancing the growing community of learners.

Incorporating experiential learning activities, such as visual thinking strategies, and hands-on arts-based discovery, also allow for successful completion of the Guaranteed Transfer Pathways Competencies as defined by the state of Colorado (GTAH-1). Students have an opportunity to engage with creative thinking which "represents both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images or expertise in original ways and experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking and risk taking".[7]

Figure 1: ART 110 Summer 2021. Students in foreground making recycled paper, students in background exploring diverse drawing/painting media.

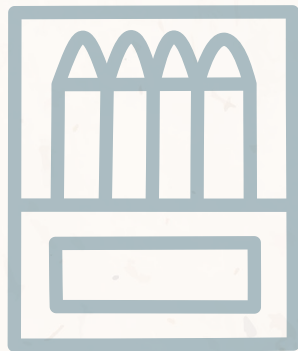*Figure 2: ART 110 Student Spring 2022. Exploring the process of modeling with clay.*

The effectiveness of these student-centered activities is evidenced in the student's participation, and verbal and written literacy skills. In a single semester, I have witnessed students move from writing a single paragraph on what they see to expounding in depth. Rather than state simple observations, students can carefully observe and decode layers of visual iconography in a given work. They are able to identify social, cultural, economic, gender, religious, and political ideologies and provide reasons for their statements.

Student engagement is evident as they learn their ideas, stories, and experiences provide valuable perspectives and contribute to the learning community. Completion

of assignments (based on assigned reading assignments from text) increases as students find intrinsic motivation to come to class prepared for discussion. Exam completion and scores increase as students have opportunities to practice vocabulary, understand processes and make connections between what they have learned and what they have practiced. I have witnessed students build friendships, encourage their peers, and demonstrate joy in learning. (see Figure 3)

Students enter our classroom with a wealth of experience, ideas, and perspectives. Visual Thinking Strategies and experiential learning provide opportunities for students to share who they are, what they think, and realize the importance of education in their own lives. This seemingly simple activity has offered endless rewards for the students and myself. I find that I learn about them as individuals, and I learn from their insights and perspectives. *S*

Figure 3: ART 110 students collaborate and express joy with ephemeral art.

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Stop Teaching to the Textbook!
Use and Create Your Own Free Resources

by Dr. Emma Murray

THE information we teach to students in our 100 and 200-level courses comes from the wealth of collective human knowledge: the result of thousands of years of collaborative and cooperative discovery and learning. This knowledge does not belong to Pearson or McGraw Hill or any other major publisher. While 94% of students believe that having access to a textbook is required for course success (Senack, 2014), many students either don't purchase a textbook, earn a lower grade, take fewer courses, or drop or withdraw from courses (see Jhangiani et al. 2018 and references therein). Why? Because of the high costs of textbooks. Back when I was a student, I remember the stress of buying and trying to use the expensive textbooks required for the course. I would scour the internet for older editions, spending well over my monthly food budget for books that didn't match what we had covered in class. "What should I learn? Will this be on the exam? Is this what the professor means by 'reading around the subject'?!" Aside from some updated case studies and a new cover, the newer books in the library were almost identical to my older edition. Unsurprisingly, research tells us that many

publisher textbooks fall short of supporting students in learning fundamental concepts, that many textbooks are not written with best teaching practices in mind, and that new editions are largely unnecessary (see Klymkowsky, 2007 and references therein). So why are we still using them?

Textbooks have always been a fundamental part of college classes and it is true that the right textbook can support student learning (Dockx et al., 2020). The issue is one of accessibility, equality, and flexibility. Before I switched to free resources, my courses used an outdated lab manual and a large, expensive textbook accompanied by an online platform for some assignments and study modules. The book and online platform were frequently changed, requiring additional work each semester, and the textbook and study resources rarely matched how I wanted to teach the content. Students still struggled with mastering the material both in and out of the classroom, preparing for classes, taking notes, summarizing and reviewing material, and ultimately demonstrating their understanding, even when I put great effort into engaging and interactive classes. When I surveyed students I learned that they found the textbook too detailed

and wordy, that most hated the buggy online learning platform, and that students rarely used their textbook. I saw the same frustrations that I felt as a student in my own students. I was equally frustrated at using resources that were often more of a hindrance than the asset I needed, but alternative textbook and lab manual options were both expensive, repetitive and pretty much all the same.

OERs as a tool to reduce barriers to learning

Switching to using and creating Open Educational Resources (OER) in my Major's level Biology classes has been a perfect solution for improving student success, equality and accessibility, and also my own experience as an instructor. OERs are resources that are free for both students and instructors to adopt, use and modify as they wish. They save students money, allow instructors to take an à la carte approach when selecting course resources, and ultimately provide the opportunity to move away from teaching to the textbook. OERs are not just textbooks — they are videos, worksheets, lab manuals, workbooks, you name it. The variation in options, plus the fact that most resources can be edited, means that instructors can provide students with the resources they need in the way that best suits the material and learning outcomes. Studies have shown that students perform the same or better using OER texts compared to commercial textbooks, and view them more favorably (e.g. Jhangiani et al. 2018). Open Educational Resources are very cost effective for students, which helps offset additional student expenses that they may incur. Incorporating OERs can increase engagement, participation, and understanding, and to encourage students to work both together and independently in and out of class. It really is a win-win situation if done correctly!

How to find and use OERs

A resource is free to use if it is licensed under the Creative Commons license. Several variations of these licenses exist depending on how the resources can be edited and distributed, starting with free to use and distribute, to the freedom to edit and re-publish. The Creative Commons site describes different types of CC licenses: https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses/. There are many options for finding and using OERs, and the options are growing as OERs become more popular. The University of Nevada, Reno has a great summary here: Open Educational Resources: Where to Find, as does the Aims Free-to-Student (F2S)/OER Grant Initiative site (https://libguides.aims.edu/

F2Sinitiative). Many popular sites such as Khan Academy and YouTube also have free content.

You can also edit existing resources or create your own. Editing is a great way to quickly get resources to perfectly suit your class. Don't cover pages 46-48 or half of chapter 3? No problem! You can create your own edited version. For my course textbook, I made edits to the main OER textbook for Major's Biology (OpenStax Biology 2e) by removing or editing sections where the content did not best reflect the course. Students have access to a PDF of the book and can also order a printed copy through the Bookstore for printing costs. I have been able to match the book to my course, rather than the other way around.

### How do students access the resources, and are there any downsides?

There are many misconceptions about OERs, such as resources being lower quality, or that they are difficult to find or use. While using OERs is not without potential pitfalls (see here for a pros and cons article: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/oer/pro-con-oer.html), most subjects now have excellent OER textbooks that are as comprehensive and professional as publisher-created texts, complete with supporting resources such as question banks, slides, D2L packages, options for students to purchase printed copies, and other accessibility options. This site addresses some of these myths and misconceptions: https://tacomacc.libguides.com/oer/myths. It is true that selecting, editing and creating your own resources takes time and effort; however, I believe that the benefits of tailored, free resources for both students and instructors is more than worth it. If you edit or create OERs, you should consider how students will access them. Uploading your resource to your D2L shell is a good start. You can also work with our Reprographics department and Bookstore to make printed copies available for students who want hard copies, which is recommended since research has shown that students prefer and are more likely to use features in print rather than electronic textbooks (Woody, Daniel & Baker, 2010).

How creating OERs has improved student success and made teaching easier

Creating your own OER resources is the icing on the cake. I chose to create my own course materials and use them alongside existing OERs, some of which I have edited. Making my own OER resources has turned out to be a great way to improve classes for both our students and instructors

alike. I created a combination workbook and lab manual for both Majors Biology I and II. Students complete the worksheets and labs as we progress through the course. I focused particularly on developing labs that focus on critical thinking, inquiry, and transferable skills in place of the cookie cutter labs typically found in most publisher-created lab manuals. The workbook can be used as preparation for covering new material, as in-class activities and review, as review for subsequent classes, and as study tool for exams and assignments. The combination workbook and lab manual is available digitally for free for any student or instructor to use and edit at OER Commons https://www.oercommons.org/, and printed copies are available for $8 in the Aims Bookstore. An instructor's guide for running labs is also available to any instructor who uses any part of the manual.
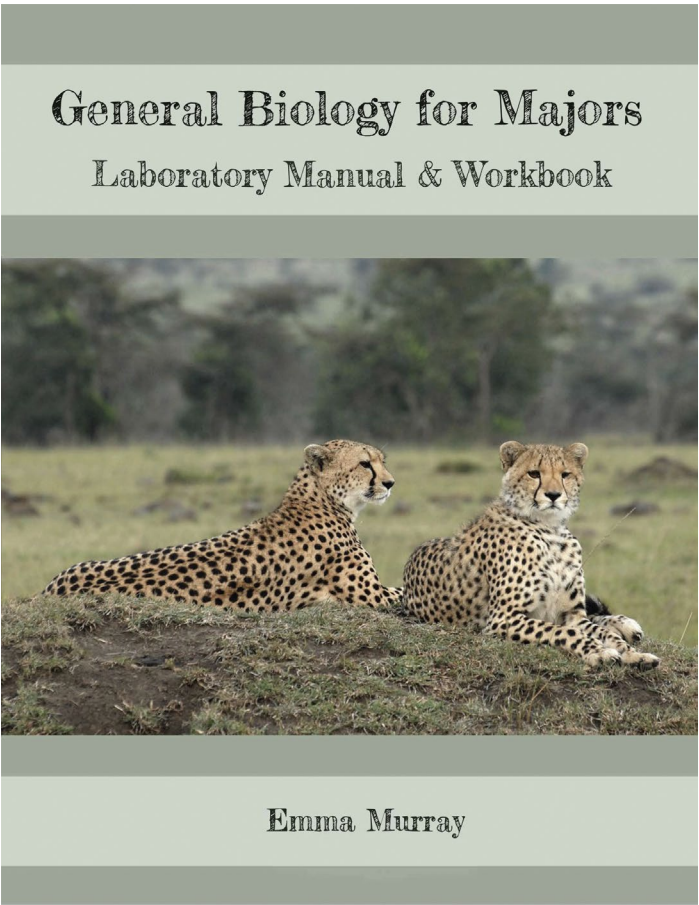
The *General Biology for Majors Lab Manual and Workbook* can be downloaded at https://www.oercommons.org/courses/biology-for-majors-lab-manual-and-workbook-plus-instructor-guide

The workbook component asks students to compile, summarize and review content throughout the course and can be used as a flexible resource for low-stakes assignments and formative assessment throughout the

semester. If students are not understanding a particular concept, instructors can assign that part of the workbook as an in-class activity or assign it for the next class. Likewise, if the class is grasping a concept quickly, I can skip the worksheet on that content or recommend it as a study tool. As the lead instructor for both courses, I can use this lab manual and workbook to create consistency between sections and make changes each semester in response to student and instructor feedback. Furthermore, switching to OERs also provided the opportunity to redesign the courses with a backwards design and learner-centered approach, focussing on meeting course objectives rather than just covering the material presented in a single textbook.

Overall, students have benefited from using the workbook and feedback has been positive. While some students will see additional work as busy work, some students commented that they wish we had used the workbook more:

> "(The workbook) gave me a different understanding than the lectures, especially when I was confused."

> "The workbook was helpful in understanding the content after class, it was great!"

> "I LOVED the workbook. It helped me to learn and understand the topics a bit more."

> "(The workbook) was a good pairing with the labs to connect back to lecture."

> "The workbook did help as it further tested our level of understanding / used as study material to go over certain topics."

By including the workbook, student comprehension and engagement have improved and students are coming to class more prepared. For example, when covering a topic on enzymes, I directed students to videos I had made and other online resources to pick from and assigned the worksheet on enzymes before class. Students had to complete several tasks and make drawings to illustrate how enzymes work and how they are regulated. This is normally something we cover in class, and students generally don't retain the information well. However, this time, because students came to class having completed the worksheet, they were able to illustrate different parts of the enzymes content. All students knew and understood the material and were able to tell me how enzymes work and are regulated without me teaching it in class, and all I needed to do was reinforce and clarify when needed. I graded the worksheet for completion to cut down on grading and let students make any corrections while

> "Studies have shown that students perform the same or better using OER texts compared to commercial textbooks, and view them more favorably."

discussing the answers so the worksheets then became a study resource. This set them up well for a take-home exam on enzymes where they then had to make an enzyme from modeling clay and record video or slideshow of their enzyme working and being regulated. Students had still retained what they learned by the end of the course! In the past, activities and concepts like these would have been really challenging, but because students covered the content at their own pace, they all did great! For example, one student said "Honestly, I learned way better with the take-home play-doh exams and understood the topic way more". Another said "The most memorable thing I learned would be photosynthesis and mitosis/meiosis because of the activities/assignments. I liked the take-home exams and assignments because you had to demonstrate what was happening and if I was unable to I knew I needed to ask questions/review the material." Other students commented that they enjoyed the take-home exams, that the challenge of using creativity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and plan out an animation really helped them to learn the biological processes, and that they retained the information better afterwards compared to in-class exams.
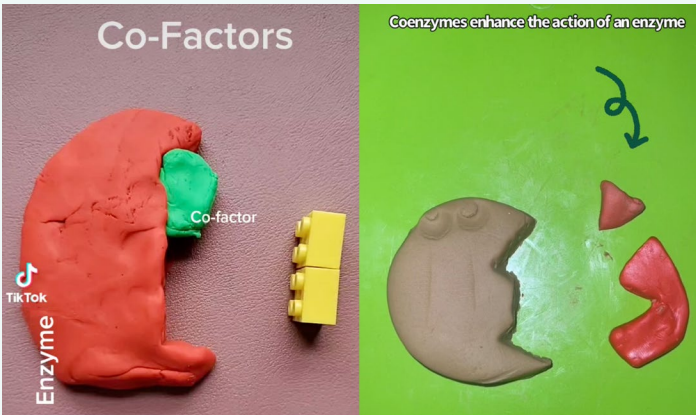
Screenshots of students' enzyme animation take-home assignment.

How can I go about creating OERs?

Creating your own OER resources is work, but also a rewarding and valuable endeavor. Remember that any resource that you make free to others is an OER, and you likely already have some of these already in place.If you are looking to create a larger body of work such as a manual or workbook, I recommend starting with the following questions:

- What resources could have better materials for students (e.g. current materials lacking in content, too complex, could be delivered better, not user-friendly, etc.)?
- What do students need to know to meet course objectives for this particular topic?
- What is the best or a better way to deliver this content or make the resource more student (or instructor) friendly?

Funding for larger projects is also available through programs such as the F2S Initiative with Aims' Keifer Library (https://www.aims.edu/locations/kiefer-library/free-textbooks)

I loved the challenge and flexibility of creating my own resources and I encourage other instructors to do the same. I scratched my creative itch by producing the artwork and images for the labs and workbook. The result is a body of work provides a resource for both students and instructors and something I am very proud of! Because of the success of the project, I will be working with other members of my department to make OER manuals for our other science classes. Ⓢ

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TEACHING SQUARES:
Bringing New Insights into the Classroom Through Peer Observations

by Dr. Carole Brown

HOW OFTEN DO YOU COMMUNICATE OR INTERACT WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES?

Whether it is a passing 'hi, how are you?' in the hallway between classes, a casual conversation before a department meeting, or an in-depth conversation over coffee, colleague interactions occur almost daily and can foster within us a sense of community and collegiality. Now ask yourself, how familiar are you with your colleagues' teaching approaches? Sure, you may have casually discussed some teaching ideas with them, or maybe even shared elements of your curriculum, but would you happen to know how they structure each class period? What do their interactions with students look like? How do they implement their learner-centered approaches? More importantly, what if they utilize innovative techniques in the classroom that could re-energize your own teaching approaches?

To get a sneak peek into your colleague's classes and to encourage faculty to participate in shared observations and reflections, the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (FTLC) recently launched the Teaching Squares program in Spring 2022. This program is designed to be a supportive, non-evaluative process that promotes dialogue and reflection amongst faculty members. Open to all faculty (full-time and adjunct), this program provides an opportunity to learn from each other by observing peer faculty members. Faculty who participated in this program this past spring really enjoyed having peer observations completed, as well as the opportunity to observe others. "Why are [class observations] so rare to experience?" one faculty participant commented. Another faculty member commented that "the biggest strength of this program was that it was a safe space." A safe space where faculty can openly share and receive feedback without it being tagged to evaluations can promote and encourage the honest exchange of feedback for the purpose of improving one's teaching. Feedback from faculty participants further emphasized the importance of the connections that were made with their peers.

WHAT IS A TEACHING SQUARE?

Each teaching square cohort consists of a group of four instructors that observe each other within a four-to-five week period. Participants enhance their own teaching based on the shared observations and reflections of the Square partners. In this program, everyone has the opportunity to participate and learn from each other regardless of discipline, modality, and teaching experience. Once Squares are assigned, each faculty member or cohort can identify a theme that they would like to explore. The three themes are instructional approach, classroom environment and student engagement, and inclusive pedagogy.

Exploring the three themes:

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Participants who choose this theme work on utilizing various instructional strategies to increase student engagement. Furthermore, they explore ways to help students make multi-faceted connections with lesson content, which can help enhance student success. By implementing a creative teaching approach that consists of several modalities, faculty work towards infusing equity in the classroom by catering to diverse student backgrounds, experiences, and abilities.

The FTLC provides a few ideas of instructional strategies that participants can consider during their peer observations. Some examples include the following:

- Incorporate short, engaging videos into lesson content supplement or deliver content.

- Allow students to engage with lesson content via low-stakes quizzes and assignments

- Provide students with choice surrounding content, assignments. (For example, choosing a topic they are interested in for an assignment, choosing a preferred format of assignment for submission, etc.)

- Use various instructional strategies that engage all students

- Learn about appropriate technology tools that can help elevate teaching approach and enhance the student experience (Nearpod, Kahoot, Wordwall, Jamboard, Padlet)

- Encourage opportunities for students to be engaged with the instructor (office hours, constructive feedback, feedback surveys, etc.)

- Connect lesson content with other courses and the lived experiences of all students.

Faculty observations begin with a pre-observation form, where the faculty to be observed identifies a few elements that they would like their observer to focus on and share feedback on. In this sample pre-observation form (Figure 1), the faculty about to be observed shares that they would like to grow their student engagement methods beyond the weekly discussion forum. In response to this comment and in preparation for the observation, the faculty observer offers feedback on a way to grow student engagement and collaboration through group projects. The faculty being observed also indicated that they would like to receive feedback on their content videos (in the online course), to which the observer has also provided feedback.

Following the pre-observation form, an Observation Form is filled out during (or after) the observation. In this form, the observer provides feedback by documenting the instructional approaches that were used in the class or module, followed by suggestions that could be beneficial to the course (Figure 2).
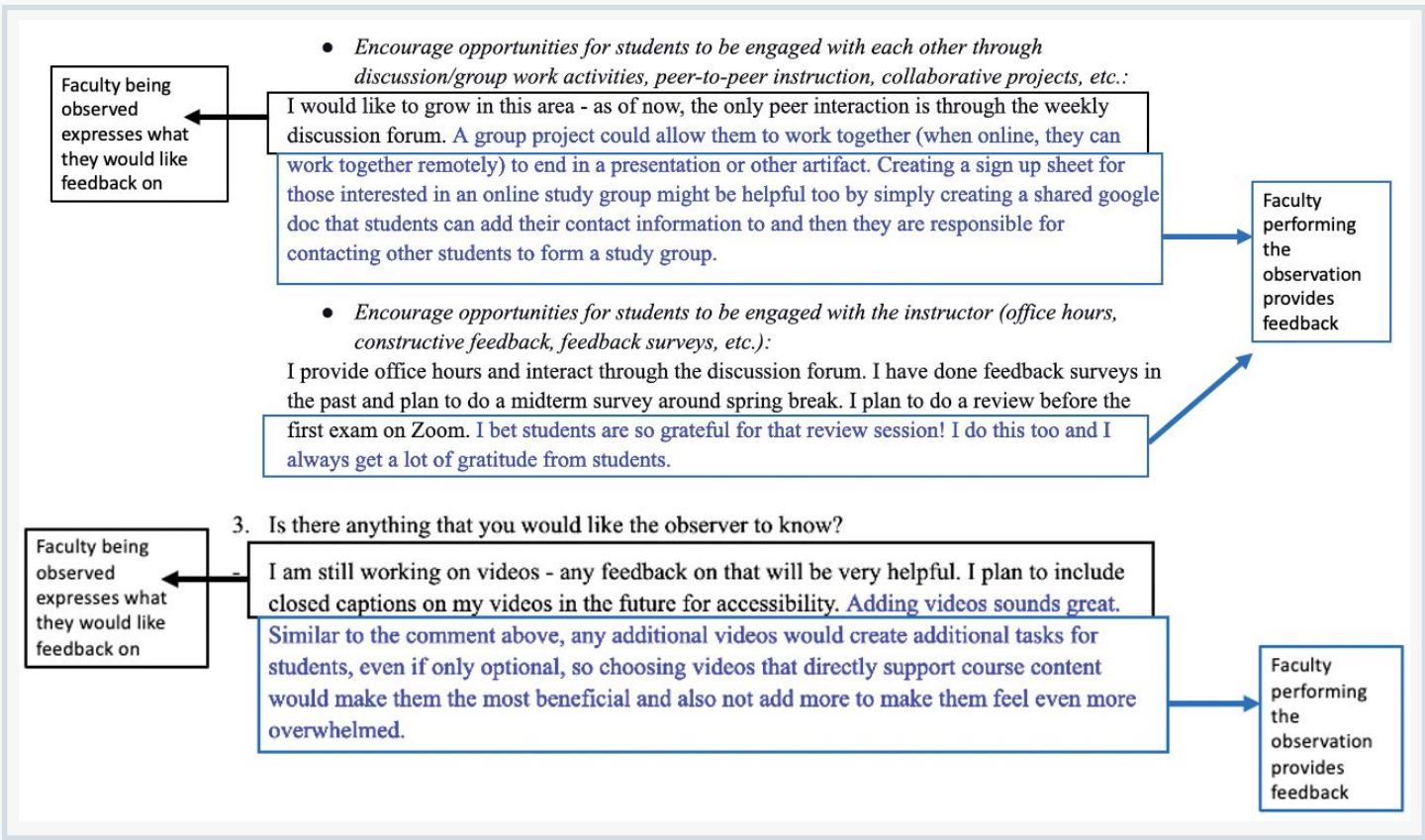

Figure 1: Sample pre-observation form. Black text indicates comments left by faculty being observed. Blue text indicates comments left by the observer.
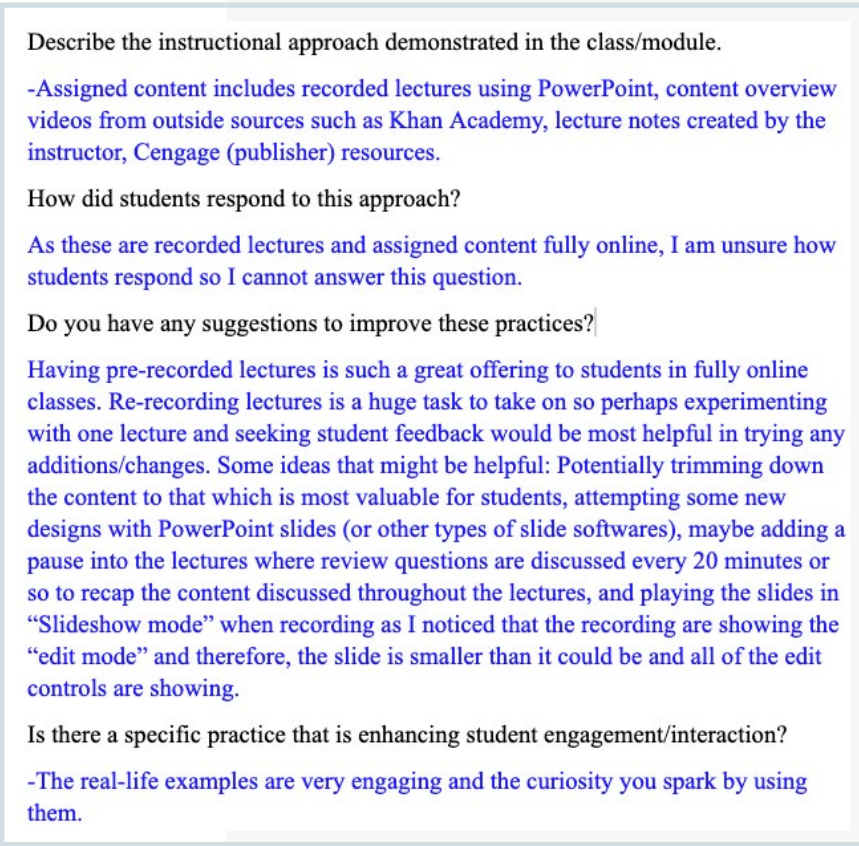

Figure 2: Sample Instructional Approach observation form. Blue text indicates feedback provided by the faculty performing the observation.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In this theme, participants explore approaches that can help facilitate the learning process. Faculty are provided with a checklist to help stimulate some ideas that could enhance student engagement. To meet the best practices of Classroom Environment and Student Engagement, one can consider both, the course structure and student engagement.

Course Structure:

- Set up the course in D2L with a clear and organized flow that is easy to navigate. That way, students spend their time learning the material, not searching for it.

- Encourage students to set a study schedule to stay on task and successfully complete the course.

- Personalize your course content to establish your presence (instructor-generated PowerPoints, videos, worksheets, etc.)

- Link lesson concepts to a purpose, future classes/activities, or transferable work skills (problem-solving, communication, teamwork, technical competence, self-management, etc.).

- Throughout the course, assign practice quizzes, low-stakes quizzes, or small assignments that can help students prepare for later, larger exams or assignments in your course.

Student Engagement:

- Get to know your students on a personal level. Establish a rapport with students to foster a sense of belonging.

- Show excitement and motivate students! Tell students what motivates you about this content and the course.

- Students can learn from their peers so feel free to share helpful study tips from previous students. To gather this information, consider polling students each semester. This helps create a pool of helpful study tips that you can then share each semester with the new cohort of students.
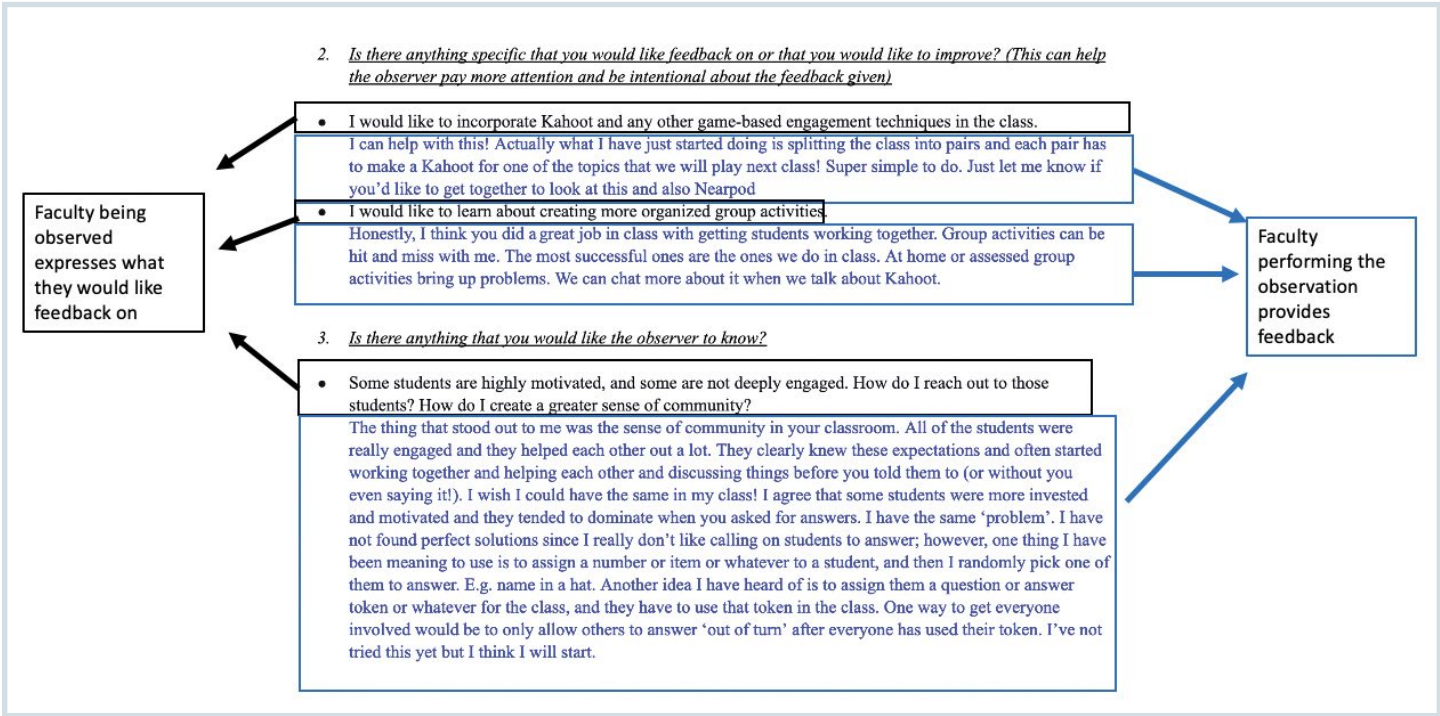
Figure 3: Sample pre-observation form. Black text indicates comments made by faculty being observed. Blue text indicates comments made by the observer.

Figure 4: Sample Classroom Environment & Student Engagement observation form. Blue text indicates feedback provided by the faculty performing the observation.

- Maintain consistency in your course and student interactions: consistent course structure, grading schedule, timely feedback, reminders, positive messaging
- Encourage a growth mindset and share strategies for success.
- Assign students small groups to share challenges, successes, concerns to foster a sense of community
- Create multiple check-ins each week to keep students engaged.

Figure 3 depicts an interaction between another pair of participants who chose to tackle the Classroom Environment and Student Engagement theme. In the pre-observation form, the faculty being observed identified several elements that could enhance their classes, including Kahoot! or other game-based platforms, group activities, and creating a sense of community. In response, the observing faculty offered to help as they were familiar with the Kahoot! platform. Additionally, they offered their partner positive feedback on the current practices that they observed, all while expressing a shared concern about creating community in the classroom.

Feedback and discussion are further elaborated in the Observation form filled out by the observer (Figure 4).

Suggestions to enhance student engagement included proposing Nearpod to engage a greater number of students and adding mini-breaks into the lesson to keep students engaged for the duration of the class period (Figure 4).

INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY
This theme allows faculty to work on student-centered and equity-focused approaches to teaching. That takes into consideration the diverse students' backgrounds, lived experiences, and learning preferences and abilities of all learners. In this approach, instructors work with students to create an open environment that fosters equitable access to content and is founded on mutual respect. The checklist provided to faculty consists of 4 categories:

1. Know yourself
2. Being mindful of your students
3. Being mindful of your curriculum and course materials
4. Being mindful of your student approach

Examples include participating in accessibility training or culturally sustaining teaching and inclusive pedagogy sessions that are offered by the FTLC or by external sources such as other institutions or external conferences. This theme emphasizes student backgrounds and their needs and approaches the curriculum mindfully to ensure that no student is left behind. Providing clear expectations

and grading criteria for all course assignments and ensuring that the syllabus tone is positive and inclusive are a few examples of approaching the curriculum with an inclusive lens. Incorporating a mindful student approach entails providing opportunities for diverse perspectives to be heard and asking students for their input on class expectations or class assignments when applicable. Creating a safe space for students, normalizing a mental health break, and providing opportunities for care and support in your classroom are some examples that can be explored by teaching square participants who choose this theme.

WRAPPING IT UP …
After exploring the chosen theme, engaging in classroom observations, and working on the observation forms, Square participants get together one final time to share feedback, experiences, and brainstorm takeaways. By participating in this program, engaging in classroom observations, and reflecting on one's own teaching practices, faculty can leave the program with various takeaways. Meeting and connecting with faculty members across disciplines allows faculty members to build networks with colleagues across the college. This might spark new collaborations across campus and create a sense of community as faculty interact with other colleagues who share the same goals and challenges in the classroom. Additionally, this program can help re-energize one's teaching. Specifically, by observing other instructors in the classroom, faculty members may get inspired to adopt ideas and strategies in their own classes. The program can also help provide insight into one's own teaching approach. For example, having a

fresh point of view and a fresh peer perspective provides an opportunity for reflection and feedback on issues that can improve the teaching approach and the student experience. Throughout this process, the FTLC offers continuous support and communication to ensure that all answers and concerns are addressed. Through organizing the cohorts, coordinating scheduling, and providing resources and guidelines, the goal is to ensure that faculty leave with an overall positive experience and valuable takeaways that benefit their classes and most importantly, their students.

To learn more about this program and how to participate, contact FTLC Chair: carole.brown@aims.edu. *S*

Equity Toolkit to Close Equity Gaps Among Colorado College Students

Aims faculty learn strategies to help erase Colorado's Equity Gap and increase college completion rates and financial mobility

by Meg Spencer and Dr. Carole Brown

IT may surprise some to know that while Colorado's education rate is one of the highest in the country, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) reports that "the share of the white majority population that has earned a credential is more than twice that of our fastest-growing group—Latinx and Hispanic Coloradans—and more than 1.5 times the share of African American, Black and American Indian Coloradans." Yet the current demand for educated and trained employees in the state exceeds that of qualified job candidates. The gaps or differences illustrate an "equity gap."

In response to the disparity between the white and non-white populations, the CDHE created a Master Plan to "increase the number of Coloradoans, aged 25-34 who hold a high-quality postsecondary credential – that is, a certificate or degree – to 66 percent by 2025" (CDHE Masterplan).

COLORADO EQUITY GAPS: GETTING TO 66% COMPLETION
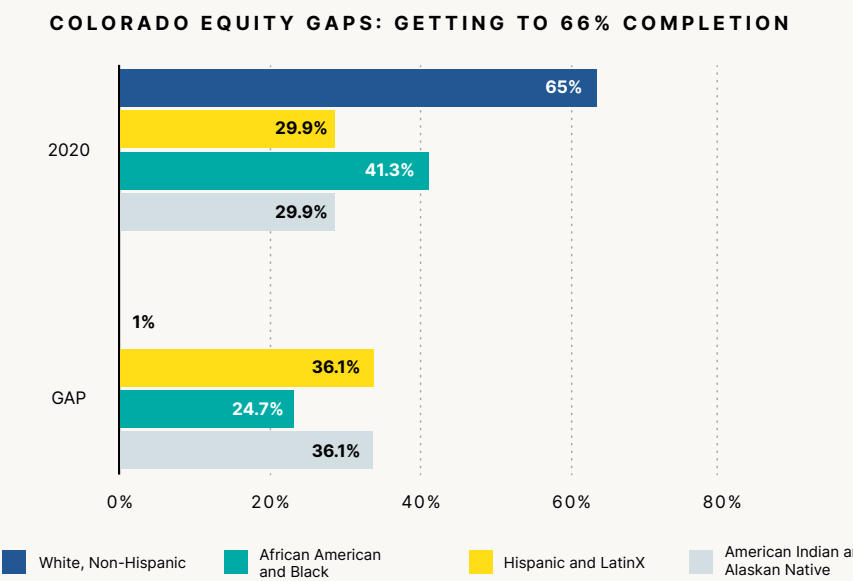
To meet that goal, CDHE collaborated with educational leaders across the state to create a curriculum to help faculty erase equity gaps in the classroom.

Becoming a more inclusive and equitable educator is not instantaneous. It requires ongoing learning, practicing, and assessing one's influence on student learning to improve instruction and, thus, the educational success of racially marginalized students. Using strategies from CDHE Equity Toolkit, instructors can work together across the state to increase college certificate/degree attainment to 66% for all students.

The Aims Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, whose mission is "to foster a culture of continuous growth and improvement of teaching practices centered on implementing equitable learner-centered pedagogy to empower all students to succeed," hosted an Equity Toolkit workshop on December 16-17, 2021.

To bring the toolkit to life at Aims Community College, Fleurette (Flo) King facilitated the sessions. She has also guided transformational equity workshops for the Aims Council on Equity and Inclusion. As a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice (DEIJ) consultant, King provides training for various groups, including higher education, athletic organizations and local governments.

On Day One of the workshop, King introduced attendees to the practice of self-inquiry in terms of intersecting identities, which can "affect how we experience power, privilege, and oppression" (CDHE. Equity Toolkit). Studies in Stenhouse (2012) as cited by CDHE, demonstrate that a self-inquiry practice " can help instructors identify how their teaching practices might unknowingly perpetuate dominant beliefs and biases related to privileged and marginalized social identities." This is a first step to developing perspectives that can uncover how students with varied cultures, values, beliefs, and lived experiences may find traditional content or teaching practices to be irrelevant or confusing in that they do not see themselves reflected in the course purpose or materials. Instead, equitable approaches invite students to apply the knowledge and resources of their lived experiences to course concepts, which can motivate and empower students to transfer new learning to other contexts or environments.

Throughout the two-day event, participants evaluated their awareness of how their lived experiences and background impact their approaches to teaching. Notably, when it comes to this line of inquiry, we acknowledge that every person engaged in this kind of work is on the same journey but a different path; some are just beginning to understand the impact of equity in the classroom while others are further along. Either way, self-inquiry and employing equity and inclusion in the classroom is a life-long process. Other colleagues and students, however, experience the lack of equity day- to-day because of their often marginalized-identities at school, in the workplace, or in the larger socio-political landscape. Inherent in equitable teaching, is a framework of social justice, "a communal effort dedicated to creating

Fig. 3 Participants and facilitator Fleurette King celebrate the completion of a series of the CDHE's Equity Toolkit modules.

and sustaining a fair and equal society in which each person and all groups are valued and affirmed" (Lewis, 2022). Thus, when education leaders can employ equity and inclusion in their teaching practice, they are key contributors in bringing about a fair and equal society.

Reflecting on this session, one participant commented that they are "more comfortable interacting with people of different identities than [their] own" because of the workshop. Others remarked that they gained self-awareness and valued the safe, non-judgmental space King created for the group. So, too, do students benefit from a learning space that feels non-judgmental.

Ideally, students experience this on the first day of a course, but it is never too late to initiate strategies to help students feel valued and supported, which motivates their learning, especially as learning becomes more complex. Studies (Ambrose, 2010) have shown that "students' perceptions of class climate (whether they experience the classroom as supportive and inclusive, or "chilly" and marginalizing) can have a dramatic impact on their learning outcomes."

Under King's guidance, workshop faculty considered a toolkit suggestion for discovering how they come across on the first day of class. In the scenario, a teacher invited a trusted colleague or mentor to conduct "race-conscious observations of student engagement and listen for subtle (sometimes hidden) verbal and non-verbal messages that are given to students." Are they unknowingly connecting

only the students in the front row? Or students who look like themselves? Perhaps they unintentionally dismiss a student's comment because it is deemed irrelevant. This feedback could help educators create a more supportive and inclusive classroom.

A third component of the Equity Toolkit for faculty is "Creating and maintaining a culturally relevant classroom community." King prompted small group discussions to identify ways to develop an inclusive environment, regardless of modality. For example, did the faculty convey that they have high expectations for all students, including underserved students, or did they ask students to share something interesting about themselves, beyond their name and area of study? Favorite celebratory meals, meaningful family traditions, and why students value them. For more ideas, Carleton College provides an exciting resource for educators.

Participants also examined King's list of inclusive methods that related to interactions among and between students and teachers. In small groups, educators shared what they have used and what they might like to try.
- Use visuals that do not reinforce stereotypes; rather, include diverse lived experiences and world views.
- Help students connect their prior knowledge to new learning (e.g., before introducing a new topic ask students individually to reflect on what they already know about the topic).
- Refrain from asking individual students to speak for a social identity group.

- Set expectations for students to explore other perspectives, however, uncomfortable.

On Day Two, King introduced educators to "Designing and implementing an inclusive course." The goal of this module was to help teachers apply self-awareness and identify underlying beliefs that might restrict (unintentionally) students' abilities to learn and complete an assignment. Participants considered how their beliefs may have impacted what they asked of students. For instance, what patterns surfaced that shed light on assignment design? Did assignments focus on students' lack or deficit, or did they offer opportunities for students to choose how to showcase what they know? What did students say about the assignments? Student feedback can be one of the most valuable tools for teachers to assess the impact of their instruction and identify more equitable strategies to help students' learning thrive.

Reflections
Workshop participants' feedback captured the impact of the two-day workshop. One educator reflected on King's teaching skills, "I really appreciated how King modeled effective facilitation, especially correcting errors or offering expansion and clarification. The workshop was a good mix of [being] supportive and challenging." Faculty and staff valued time to learn from each other and practice applying strategies in small groups. Colleagues highly regarded workshop activities that prompted deep conversations identifying course assignments that inadvertently exclude students of color. Another teacher commented that "the takeaway was the activity for self-reflection and how to make coursework inclusive." Another attendee put this work into perspective: " We are only scratching the surface. There is so much more to learn!"

Looking forward
Aims' Faculty Teaching and Learning Center is committed to providing faculty with professional development that increases collegiality and equips teachers with effective and equitable tools to raise our students' ability to become qualified candidates for employment that will enhance the quality of their lives.

Through the FTLC professional development resources, Aims faculty can also earn certificates, including one focused on equitable teaching, and earn points toward an annual stipend. To learn more, please contact FTLC Chair carole.brown@aims.edu ⓢ

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"Equity" Glossary - Equity Toolkit (https://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/equitytoolkit/glossary/)

"Equity gap" Student success | Institutional Effectiveness at PCC https://www.pcc.edu/institutional-effectiveness/student-success/

Lewis, J.(2022)." Social Justice." Terminology - John Lewis Institute for Social Justice (https://www.ccsu.edu/johnlewisinstitute/terminology.html)

Further reading:
Inclusive Teaching Guide | Columbia CTL (https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/resources/inclusive-teaching-guide/)
Inclusive Teaching – The Basics to Advanced Practices (https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/)
Student-Instructor Classroom Interaction (https://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/certop/imp_sti.html)

For Advising:
Advisors Lead Advisors Lead. Advisors LEAD | Higher Education (https://highered.colorado.gov/educators/programs/advisors-lead)

FACULTY PROFESSIONAL GROWTH *and* DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS

ONGOING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

maintains enthusiasm, improves our teaching practice, and allows us to exchange ideas with and learn from a community of fellow lifelong learners. The Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (FTLC) honors faculty commitment to continuous improvement by formally recognizing faculty dedication to teaching, student success, and their field through our Professional Growth and Development Certificate Program.

Congratulations to this year's recipients!

Focused Professional Growth and Development Certificate: Dedication to Inclusion and Equity

This certificate recognizes a faculty member's dedication to inclusion and equity at Aims. This dedication has been demonstrated by recipients completing professional activities by which they have increased their understanding of issues related to inclusion and equity in our community and in our classrooms.

Jason Borchert

Meha Darooka

Allison Easley

Heather Fitzpatrick

Elizabeth Grounds

Connie Lance

DeAnna Laurel

Sandy Myers

Denise Pearson

Cerisa Reynolds

Moumita Roy

Rebecca Sailor

Karen Scarpella

ShawnaLee Washam

Eden Welker

Focused Professional Growth and Development Certificate: Teaching Practice and Student Success

This certificate recognizes a faculty member's dedication to growing their teaching practice to improve student success. This dedication has been demonstrated by recipients completing professional activities by which they have explored pedagogical/andragogical methods, technologies, or approaches; classroom management skills; communication and feedback techniques; instilling a growth mindset; and providing support for their students to increase student success.

Kristina Ayers	**Mike Miller**
Jason Borchert	**Emma Murray**
Laura Brashear	**Sandy Myers**
Casey Clay	**Denise Pearson**
Meha Darooka	**Cerisa Reynolds**
Allison Easley	**Francie Rottini**
Katey Ellis	**Moumita Roy**
Heather Fitzpatrick	**Rebecca Sailor**
Kendra Griffin	**Karen Scarpella**
Elizabeth Grounds	**Johanna Scheurman**
Carolyn Ikenouye	**Brian Seemann**
Laura Killen-Wing	**Johnny Sowder**
Marge Lambeth	**Doug Strauss**
Connie Lance	**ShawnaLee Washam**
DeAnna Laurel	**Eden Welker**
Jennifer Markiewicz	

Focused Professional Growth and Development Certificate: Dedication to Growth Within One's Discipline

This certificate recognizes a faculty member's dedication to their discipline. This dedication will be shown by completing at least three professional activities by which they have explored best teaching practices specific to their field; acquired new knowledge, discoveries, and practices within their discipline; or contributed to their discipline through the creation of presentations, publications, and other works.

Kendra Griffin

Jeffery Moser

Sandy Myers

Cerisa Reynolds

Eden Welker

Focused Professional Growth and Development Certificate: General Growth and Development

This certificate recognizes a faculty member's dedication to growth and development as teachers and professionals within their field by completing at least three professional activities from the following categoeis: Dedication to Inclusion and Equity, Teaching Practice and Student Success, and/or Dedication to Growth Within One's Discipline.

Bo Baird

Leslie Morrison

Kerry Noble

FACULTY AND STAFF AWARDS

2022-2023 Part-Time Faculty Engagement Stipend Recipients

Designed by the Adjunct Faculty Committee, the Part-Time Faculty Engagement Stipend is a compensation system recognizing dedicated service to the college by part-time faculty. This annual stipend is awarded to part-time faculty for attending a minimum of ten hours of professional development and engaging in a minimum of ten hours of service during the previous academic year. Congratulations to this year's recipients — we truly appreciate your dedication to our students and to our community!

D'Ann Anderson
Bo Baird
Laura Brashear
Lou Cartier
Matthew Deselm
Heather Fitzpatrick
Charis Fleshner
Marna Juarez
Gloria Koss
Marge Lambeth
Connie Lance
Karen McCurley-Hardesty
Ruth McFarlane
Carole Merriman
Sandy Myers
Tammi Olson
Thora Pabst
Joanne San Nicolas
Kellie Sapp
Karen Scarpella
David Swieter
Eden Welker
Stephanie Work

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

Moumita Roy
2022 Dean-Selected Full-time Faculty of the Year

Jackie McGuire
2022 Dean-Selected Part-time Faculty of the Year

Linda Richardson
2022 Dean-Selected Staff of the Year

Amy McFarland
2022 Student-Selected Full-time Faculty of the Year

Douglas Gratton
2022 Student-Selected Part-time Faculty of the Year

Carole Brown
2022 Faculty-Selected Full-time Faculty of the Year

Karen Scarpella
2022 Faculty-Selected Part-time Faculty of the Year

Meg Spencer
2022 Faculty-Selected Staff of the Year

Emma Murray
2022 Learner-Centered Teaching Award

Francie Rottini
2022 Innovative Teaching Award

Ted Poszywak
2022 Exemplary Online Teaching Award

RETIREMENTS

Lee Devlin | 11 Years
Professor
Computer Information Services

Richard Hanks | 22 Years
Director
CARE

Donna Norwood | 35 Years
Professor
Criminal Justice

Carrie Schaefer-Randolph | 28 Years
Administrative Associate
President's Office

Nathan Wright | 28 Years
Media Technician
Information Technology

DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE OF THE YEAR

Amy McFarland
Professor & Department Chair
Agricultural Sciences & Technology

AARDVARK AWARD

Katie Guerrero
Student Services Specialist II
Registration & Records

PROGRAM RECOGNITION

Aims received an in-kind donation from Juniper Unmanned, a Colorado company that provides drone operations and aerial analytics. In late 2021, Juniper Unmanned provided approximately $100,000 worth of drones and associated technology to Aims.

Aims and Banner Health have partnered to provide frontline service team members at Banner an opportunity to transition into clinical roles by furthering their education while still working at Banner.

Aims offered a free summer and technology camp for Greeley-Evans Weld County School District 6 high school students in July. The camp focused on science, technology and innovation-based activities.

Submission Guidelines

The Fall 2023 theme is B a JEDI.

Belonging
Justice
Equity
Diversity
Inclusion

Deadline for submissions: May 15, 2023. Please submit articles, highlights, teaching tips, or book reviews for the Fall 2023 edition by emailing us at ftlc@aims.edu.

Submission categories are flexible and will include:

- **Articles:** roughly 1,000-2,000 word pieces that approach a teaching practice, method, innovation, or theory in an in-depth way. These should include peer-reviewed/ scholarly support in APA format.

- **Highlights/News:** roughly 300-500 words describing unique program, department, campus, or studentspecific accomplishments, news, awards, etc. Please include high quality pictures if you have them.

- **Teaching Tips:** roughly 500-1000 words describing a specific teaching practice, method, innovation, or idea. These short features will come with shareable instructions that a teacher in any discipline could follow.

- **Book Reviews:** roughly 300-500 words reviewing books related to instruction. Many books are available for review from the FLTC library. Reviews should speak to the quality of the selection, relevance to teaching at Aims, and application to specific disciplines. Contact ftlc@aims.edu to reserve a book.

THANK YOU
to our
CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Carole Brown
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Instructor of Mathematics

"
Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

NELSON MANDELA

Thank you to all of our Aims faculty, staff and administrators for all you do!

Aims
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GREELEY | LOVELAND | FORT LUPTON | WINDSOR | ONLINE

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