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Faculty at Forefront in Advancing UCF Student Success and Impact **Elizabeth Dooley**



Dr. Elizabeth A. Dooley serves as UCF's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. She is UCF's chief academic officer, providing leadership for 13 colleges, including a college of medicine, along with multiple campuses, research centers, and institutes. Her responsibilities include curriculum, faculty development, academic support services, student services, and oversight of UCF's academic operating budget.

Welcome to a special 2019–20 academic year!

This fall, we are reaching new highs for the retention of our students toward graduation. We are anticipating our strongest class of freshman scholars in UCF history, with projected records for SAT and ACT scores and GPA along with numbers of National Merit Scholars. And we are beginning our first full academic year as a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution – which speaks to the diversity and inclusion that distinguishes our university.

We are also opening a UCF Downtown campus that will set a new bar for higher education in teaching, innovation, community engagement, and high-impact student experiences, such as internships and service learning.

Thanks to our faculty members and academic leaders who have thoughtfully prepared the academic programs for the first 7,700 students who will experience this bold learning environment. You make us proud!

Throughout UCF, a strong faculty is the foundation for our efforts to lift lives, energize the workforce, and to offer innovations and new knowledge that address society's grand challenges.

As the academic year unfolds, we will continue to invest in faculty excellence, student

success, research, and community engagement. And we will look to you to help shape the future course of our university.

For example, faculty are part of an Enrollment Strategy Task Force that is considering strategies to best promote excellence and student success, and I look forward to engaging faculty throughout the year as we advance the core mission of the university.

Together, we are always better. And I am excited about the brighter future that we are building for our students, UCF, and the world.

Let's make 2019–20 our best academic year yet.

Welcome to the 2019–20 Academic Year!

Melody Bowdon



Melody Bowdon, Ph.D. is Interim Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning, Interim Dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies, and Professor of Writing and Rhetoric. Her responsibilities include providing leadership to the division and college and across campus to promote excellence in teaching and learning and to support efforts to increase innovation and inclusion in and beyond UCF classrooms.

This year, the Division of Teaching and Learning and the College of Undergraduate Studies will support a variety of efforts that will enable our faculty and students to thrive academically and professionally. Initiatives focused on faculty and student success include:

Pegasus Path

This course planning app will be available to all undergraduates this fall. Powered by cutting-edge technology, the Pegasus Path enables students to chart a course to on-time graduation, track their progress, imagine alternative scenarios, and engage with their advisors and faculty members. To learn more, read “Empowering Students to ‘Charge On’” (page 3) and visit <https://dtl.ucf.edu/pegasuspath/>

Refreshed General Education Program

Over the past three years, more than 75 UCF faculty members have worked together to create an integrative approach to general education that will encourage connections across courses, scaffold critical thinking, enrich the depth and rigor of student learning, and support the development of crosscutting skills. New faculty development opportunities are available again this fall, and we will hold our inaugural GEP Faculty Meeting on September 13 from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. See the GEP website <https://undergrad.ucf.edu/gep/> for more info.

Undergraduate Research

Finally, congrats to all involved with undergraduate research! UCF was the only Florida school recognized for excellence in this area by *U.S. News & World Report*. Learn more at <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/undergrad-research-programs>.

Best wishes to you for the new year.

UCF Campus Welcome Events: August 23–31

DeLaine Priest



DeLaine Priest is Associate Vice President for Student Success at UCF. With over 24 years of experience in higher education and five years of experience in business and industry, she currently provides leadership and administration to 11 units that focus on student transition, advising on career services, learning support services, the first year experience, orientation, and student success.

UCF will kick off co-curricular student engagement activities the week of August 23–31. Pegasus Palooza Welcome Week events will be sponsored on UCF campuses. At the Downtown Campus, events are included as part of the joint UCF-Valencia Week of Welcome. The purpose of these events is to provide social, academic, and service activities for students to get acquainted with the campus, learn about resources, and meet other people during their first week of the fall term. Events are hosted by units and departments as well as registered student organizations.

Main Campus signature events include:

- August 25 (4 p.m.): The Knighting—UCF’s convocation event for new students. Students will hear from campus leadership about why it’s great to be a Knight and what is expected of them as members of our community. All new students are expected to attend. Faculty and staff are invited.
- August 26–27: Campus Locators—Campus faculty and staff will be located at four strategic campus locations to help students navigate campus, share resources, and answer any questions on the first two days of the term.
- August 28 (10 a.m.): Welcome Expo—Showcase of UCF clubs and organizations, departments, and local area businesses.

Downtown Campus signature events include:

- August 26 & 27 (8 a.m.–1 p.m.): Campus Locators—Campus faculty and staff will be located at each of our academic buildings—Communication & Media Building, Dr. Phillips Academic Commons, and UnionWest to help students navigate campus, share resources, and answer any questions on the first two days of the term.
- August 28 (11 a.m.–1 p.m.): Different countries use food to celebrate special occasions. Join us as we celebrate the Culture of the Downtown campus by sharing a taste of various food trucks.

UCF Downtown students are welcome to engage in Pegasus Palooza events on the main campus provided they bring their UCF ID.

For more information about Pegasus Palooza and Downtown's Week of Welcome and the full schedule, visit <<https://fye.sdes.ucf.edu>> or contact First Year Experience at fye@ucf.edu.

Shortly, you will be receiving an invitation to a Pegasus Path faculty event that will be an opportunity to see the tool's functionalities and student benefits.

If you have any questions, please contact me at harrison.oonge@ucf.edu

Empowering Students to 'Charge On' Harrison Oonge



Harrison N. Oonge is Assistant Dean of Academic Planning in the Division of Teaching and Learning and College of Undergraduate Studies. He oversees dual enrollment, undergraduate articulation agreements, curriculum alignment, and the Pegasus Path project. Harrison is passionate about college students' access, persistence, and success of underrepresented minority groups.

Texting, checking social media and gaming are just a few uses of a mobile device. This fall, UCF undergraduates will also be able to use their phones to help them plan their college careers. How? By using the Pegasus Path.

It is an interactive degree planning tool that uses information from the myKnight Audit and undergraduate catalog and insights from college academic advisors to create a student's optimal path to timely degree completion. Each student receives a personalized, customizable plan that outlines required coursework, prompts them to participate in learning experiences such as internships and study abroad, encourages them to take advantage of resources such as Career Services, and alerts them to potentially challenging course combinations. UCF's myKnight Audit remains the official degree certification tool.

As faculty members, we have the opportunity to help shape our students' academic experiences. We are enlisting your support in creating student awareness and adoption of the Pegasus Path. During advising conversations with a student, consider asking them to update their plan before your meeting and refer to it during your conversation.

Another benefit of students using the Pegasus Path is the potential to generate reports about course demand that will help us to anticipate course sections needed.

The Pegasus Path will be available to undergraduate students in Fall 2019. To learn about the tool, please visit <dtl.ucf.edu/pegasuspath>.

The Office of Undergraduate Research: Supporting Undergraduate and Faculty Collaborations Aubrey Kuperman



Aubrey Kuperman is Assistant Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), where she supports faculty research mentors and undergraduate students. A former UCF undergraduate researcher herself, she joined OUR in 2015 after completing her master's in education policy and management at Harvard.

The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) offers several key services for faculty who are working, or are looking to work, with undergraduates on academic research or creative projects. In addition to support for activities outside of the classroom, we support research happening in the classroom through our course designation. For students interested in getting involved, please have them connect with us to learn how to get started.

Designate Your Course(s) as Research Intensive (RI): The RI course designation, rolled out for the first time last year, is designed to recognize faculty who integrate research and creative scholarship within the curriculum of their courses. Courses are designated by a faculty committee, and the designation is included in the course description and on student transcripts. Courses can be submitted for review in the fall and spring semesters. Our office offers consultations for faculty who are interested in submitting their course.

Find Undergraduate Researchers: Our office offers the Research Positions Database, where faculty can create a posting to look for students who are interested in getting involved.

Fund Undergraduate Researchers: Our office helps individual faculty and students determine what opportunities are the best fit for their needs. We help faculty start the process of using Federal Work Study to support their student research assistants, and provide information on our Student Grants, Summer Fellowships, Presentation Travel Awards, as well as pro-


grams organized by other units on-campus. We recommend that faculty have their students visit our Peer Mentors to learn about the programs that best fit them and their goals.

Document Your Mentorship Activities: We collect data on mentorship activity and can generate reports for individual faculty. These reports can be generated at any time. One way to document your work with these students is to enroll your students in 4912 credits (Directed Independent Research). Students can enroll in 0 credits at no cost (if they are enrolled in other credits). Our website can help you build a syllabus for this course.

Mentor Awards: We value the work of our outstanding faculty mentors, and each spring we recognize faculty with two awards. The Faculty Mentor of the Year is a student-nominated award that recognizes one faculty member a year and is awarded by the Student Undergraduate Research Council. We also recognize campus and college-wide contributions to the culture of undergraduate research through our new Champion of Undergraduate Research Faculty Award. Applications for the second annual awardees will open in late fall.

You can learn more about these and other services here: <https://our.ucf.edu/faculty/>. We are always happy to meet with faculty who have questions about our services or opportunities. Call or email us with any questions (407-823-0101; our@ucf.edu).

National College Health Assessment
Adrienne Frame



Adrienne Otto Frame, Ed.D. is the Associate Vice President and Dean of Students in Student Development and Enrollment Services. Her supervision encompasses Counseling and Psychological Services, Academic Support for Student Athletes, Student Legal Services, Neighborhood Relations, and Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Each year UCF administers the American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment. Of the 555 UCF students surveyed during Spring 2019 semester, students reported experiencing the following within the last 30 days:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Felt overwhelmed by all [they] had to: | 65.1% |
| Felt overwhelming anxiety: | 39.1% |
| Felt things were hopeless:..... | 27.2% |
| Felt so depressed it was difficult to function: | 22.5% |

UCF has established a continuum of care model to help support students to effectively manage the stresses they may face in their lives that may impact their academic success. Faculty and staff are uniquely situated to help in identifying students that may be in need of additional support and referring them to campus resources for help. Our campus is rich with many resources to address student needs including CAPS, Student Health, Knights Pantry, Financial Aid, Student Academic Resource Center, Student Accessibility Services, Wellness and Health Promotions, and myriad others. It can be difficult to determine which resource to refer a student to insure they get the assistance they need.

In an effort to ease the process of referrals, a new set of resources has been added this summer to the faculty tool box in Webcourses. At the top of the tool box page, on the far right hand side of the screen is a blue button that says, “Students of Concern Resources.” Clicking that button will bring you to a content box that contains information on how to notify us of students of concern. There are buttons to report a student that may be struggling to our students of concern system through Student Care Services. Entering a student’s information into that system will insure that a member of our Student Care Services team will make contact with the student to determine what services and supports they may need and help them access those services quickly and compassionately.

Student Care Services is the hub of our continuum of care model. Our care managers will work personally with students to assess their circumstances and help to order the services they need and insure they gain access to them. Care managers maintain their connection with students and continue to serve as resource agents for them throughout their times of need at the University. The buttons in Webcourses are designed to help faculty access the students of concern system seamlessly and connect a student to Care Services so the student may then be connected to the necessary resources to mitigate their struggles and increase their academic success moving forward.

The Students of Concern Resources tab in Webcourses also has links to report students whose behavior or conduct may be disruptive or potentially pose a violation of The Golden Rule Student Handbook and links to report potential Title IX situations.

Many of us have heard the “if you see something, say something” message here at UCF. The new buttons for Students of Concern Resources in Webcourses takes that one step further by asking faculty and staff, “When you see something, DO something” by referring the student to our Student Care Services network to access the care and support they need.

For more information please go to: <<https://scs.sdes.ucf.edu/>>.

Improving Retention Rates for FTIC Students

Andrew Frazer



Dr. Andrew Frazer is Associate Lecturer in the Chemistry department, teaching predominantly the two Organic Chemistry courses. He also on occasion teaches freshmen, upper-division undergraduate, and graduate Chemistry courses. Currently, he serves as faculty fellow for SDES with a focus on optimizing SARC and SI resources.

Last year, I became aware of the Re-Imagining the First Year (RFY) <<http://www.aascu.org/RFY/>> project, in which UCF participated during the 2016–17 academic year and subsequently applied for a faculty fellowship with Student Development and Enrollment Services (SDES) <<https://www.sdes.ucf.edu/>>. The initiative's primary aim was to increase retention rates and student success metrics for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students while fostering skills that set students up for achievement in and beyond the classroom. The focus of the study was on low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students, but the solutions sought were for all FTIC students.

The collaborative efforts of this three-year project, managed by SDES Assistant Vice President Mark Gumble, exposed me to an abundance of educational research, which encouraged me to reflect upon my own abilities and their impact on my students. This motivated me to attend the Power of Hidden Biases training provided by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. As a result, I was more cognizant of my interactions with students and its influence on their success. I used these moments to help students develop non-cognitive skills linked to positive academic outcomes, such as critical thinking, teamwork, and maintaining positive attitudes towards their endeavors. I found that my own enthusiasm and teaching style directly affected how well students performed. Consequently, I committed myself to becoming more relatable, responsive, and creating an inclusive environment.

When I began teaching at UCF, I held strong beliefs about what it took to be a successful student. Much of what I believed stemmed from my own experiences as an undergraduate and post-graduate. To some extent, my beliefs reinforced the idea that there was a distinct formula for success. As

chemistry faculty member, I am tasked with teaching organic chemistry, a prerequisite for many graduate and professional science-based programs. Over the years as my class sizes have grown, I began to see how the dynamics of student life were changing from what I once knew. With over 250 students in a single section, it became increasingly difficult to get to know my students and meet their individual needs. Each semester I encounter students with a variety of unique circumstances that directly influence their academic experience and personal growth. In addition, I noticed that despite passing the prerequisites, their degree of preparation for my course was highly variable. Some students lacked foundational knowledge, while others struggled with proper time management, poor study habits, and deficits in other non-cognitive skills.

To date, Organic Chemistry I and II are the 2nd and 3rd highest DFW courses in the college. Some students find the constructs that represent organic molecules and mechanisms quite abstract. Thus, explanation of phenomenon or prediction of a chemical event becomes difficult. This led me to reflect on my course structure and search for more innovative ways to prepare students. Including the use of instructional technologies, like the Reef iClicker-polling system, provided a real-time snapshot of students' familiarity with the course content. This allowed me to address any widespread confusion or misunderstandings during the lecture. It also streamlined my evaluations of course attendance and student engagement. Although organic chemistry is a challenging course, the majority of students are not chemistry majors. They are preparing for careers in medicine, dentistry, and other fields that integrate almost all disciplines of science. On countless occasions, students presented me with anecdotes of how a concept or mechanism they learned in my class appeared in other courses or applications. To increase engagement, I found ways to illustrate these relationships between organic chemistry and other disciplines. This encourages students to develop a stake in their learning in the course.

Prior to my involvement with the RFY fellowship, I was unaware of the support networks offered by SDES and various divisions and colleges throughout campus. For example, I was not aware of the Knights Academic Resource Services (KARS) website and all the free resources that are available to UCF students to assist them with their academic journey. With an increasingly diverse student population, it is imperative that the academic environment does not allow this demographic shift to become a barrier to retention and completion of a degree. Research from a variety of disciplines, including sociology and education, highlights the relationship between certain personality characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes and positive outcomes for young adults. By understanding the needs of traditionally underrepresented groups in academia, faculty are better equipped to direct students towards resource-

es that will help them reach their full potential. Our diversity is our strength, but the reality is that many of our FTIC students are less prepared than the remainder of our student population. We have to give them the opportunity to develop these skillsets by “nudging” them in the right direction.

Currently one of my projects with SDES is to identify ways to enrich the Student Academic Resource Center (SARC) and its nationally renowned Supplemental Instruction (SI) and peer tutoring service programs. Participation in the fellowship exposed me to the Office of Institutional Knowledge Management (IKM), which gathers data to develop metrics of student success <<https://ikm.ucf.edu/>>. From this data set, we pinpointed six gateway chemistry courses with concerning student success rates. The overall goal is to engage SARC SI leaders with the chemistry faculty to facilitate supplemental instruction sessions that will help students successfully complete these courses. In addition, we hope to embolden students to take advantage of the free co-curricular opportunities offered through SARC and provide opportunities for students to learn from faculty what they can do individually and with their peers to succeed. During Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, SARC provided SI for all sections of Chemistry Gateway Courses (CHM 2040, 2041, 2045, 2210, and 2211), increasing the percentage of students who participated in SI by 45%. Additionally, students enrolled in these chemistry courses who attended SI sessions at least once had higher final grades and were more likely to pass the course with a C grade or better than non-participants. The following are quotes from chemistry students who participated in SI:

“SI sessions helped reinforce my knowledge of the course.”

“I liked the ability to discuss the course material with other students.”

“The SI leader helped us learn new strategies to prepare for chemistry exams.”

As recently as Fall 2017, I introduced two new assignments to my course, particularly targeting at-risk students. At the start of the semester, I decided to utilize the mandatory attendance quiz required for all courses as a means of introducing students to SDES. In the quiz, I pose a series of questions related to the resources SDES has to offer. Correctly answering the questions required a thorough review of the SDES website. This activity served to increase awareness of SDES services and ultimately prepare them for the challenges ahead, both in organic chemistry and at UCF. Later in the semester, I offered students the chance to film themselves giving a detailed mechanism for the synthesis of a common pharmaceutical for extra credit. Data showed strong participation came from

students who were struggling with my class, many of whom were FTIC students. I found the assignment increased student engagement with the curriculum and increased their sense of responsibility in the learning process.

As I continue to explore the meaning of student success and my role in it, I am better able to reach my students and enhance their overall learning experience. The university makes a large investment in support services with the goal of providing students with the tools required for success in their academic pursuits and personal endeavors. A renewed commitment to improving our metrics and student success will surely drive us towards our goal of pre-eminence.

Raising awareness and use of all the support services offered through SDES generates a learning environment that is truly inclusive of all students, regardless of their individual differences. The greater the support we offer to our students, the stronger we are as Knights.

QEP Highlights and Announcements

Anna Maria Jones



Anna Maria Jones is Director of *What's Next*, UCF's Quality Enhancement Plan, and Professor of English. Her research and teaching focus on Victorian literature and culture and, more recently, on contemporary transnational neo-Victorianism. She is the author of *Problem Novels: Victorian Fiction Theorizes the Sensational Self* (Ohio State, 2007) and co-editor, with Rebecca N. Mitchell, of *Drawing on the Victorians: The Palimpsest of Victorian and Neo-Victorian Graphic Texts* (Ohio, 2017). She joined the UCF faculty in 2001.

As we begin the fall semester, UCF's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), *What's Next: Integrative Learning for Professional and Civic Preparation*, is entering its fourth and penultimate year, so while I welcome new faculty to UCF, I also want to take a moment to reflect on some of the many accomplishments of the faculty and staff who have participated in our initiatives, workshops, and events. For those new to UCF and unfamiliar with *What's Next*, our QEP is a required component of our accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools—Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Like every school accredited by SACSCOC, UCF designed a five-year plan to enhance student learning. Our topic, integrative learning, was adopted with the vision that “UCF undergraduates will graduate with integrative learning experiences that foster important cross-cutting, transferrable

knowledge and skills; our students will graduate with the ability to persuasively articulate and demonstrate their skills; and they will develop the capacity to transfer their skills and intentional-learning strategies to new contexts.” For those of you who have been around long enough to hear me roll out that description, take a moment to appreciate all the work that you’ve done. It’s been a busy three years!

- The QEP supported faculty-led projects that incorporated integrative learning in 93 unique courses across 39 majors. These changes include creating new courses as well as re-vamping existing courses, and, in some cases, overhauling curriculum to create new core requirements for the major.
- We estimate that over 9,000 students have been reached by QEP-funded co-curricular or extracurricular initiatives. This includes a wide range of resources, programming, and events outside the classroom.
- Fall 2018 saw the launch of the new Integrative-Learning Experience (IE) High-Impact Course Designation, which, along with the new Research-Intensive designation, joined the existing Service-Learning designation. These course designations not only help students make informed decisions about their class schedules but help departments and colleges track their high-impact course offerings. We already have 17 IE-designated courses from 12 different majors on the books.
- Over 200 unique faculty have taken time out of their busy schedules to attend the QEP’s workshops and sessions at the Summer Faculty Development Conference.
- Of course, we at the QEP can’t take all the credit for the university’s commitment to students’ high-impact learning, but some of our assessment measures definitely suggest the UCF community is making great strides toward realizing our Collective Impact Strategic Plan goal that 100% of our undergraduates will participate in a High-Impact Practice (HIP) by the time they graduate. For example, according to data collected in the Graduating Senior Survey, from a 2014 benchmark to 2018, we’ve seen an increase from 77% to 86% in senior students who report that they “applied facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations.” And over the same period, we’ve seen an increase from 61% to 79% of senior students reporting that they “worked with other students on course projects or assignment.”

In short, UCF faculty and staff have been doing a lot of innovative, meaningful work under the aegis of integrative learning. We’re excited to continue that work with you this year, so please look for our upcoming calls for proposals for funded projects and faculty workshop cohorts.

Coming this fall...

- Check out our website for the CFP for our final round of funded projects. Unlike in previous award cycles, we’ll

have a fall deadline of October 4 for these, and we’ll only be awarding Enhancement Awards (\$3500). While the emphasis on integrative learning will remain the same as in years past, in this final call we’ll be especially interested to receive proposals that do one or more of the following: 1) in keeping with UCF’s new Hispanic-Serving Institution designation, those seeking to address the needs of our Latinx students; 2) proposals focusing on students’ civic engagement and preparation; 3) those from applicants who have not previously received a QEP Enhancement or Program Innovation Award. (<<https://undergrad.ucf.edu/whatsnext/faculty-staff/awards-program/>>)

- We’ll also be running two workshop cohorts in the fall: one for faculty who plan to apply for one of the three High-Impact Course Designations—Integrative-Learning Experience (IE), Research-Intensive (RI), and Service-Learning (SL)—and one for faculty to create brief integrative-learning resource articles for our website. Applications for these will be due September 20. Visit the QEP’s main page for workshop announcements (<<https://undergrad.ucf.edu/whatsnext/>>). You’ll also receive announcements for our workshops if you subscribe to FCTL’s listserv.
- Applications for the High-Impact Course Designation are reviewed each fall and spring. Fall deadline for applications is September 13. These too are announced via the website (<<https://undergrad.ucf.edu/whatsnext/faculty-staff/integrative-learning-experience-designation/>>) and FCTL’s listserv.

Of course, if you have ideas for incorporating integrative learning in your classes, you can always call or send an email to Brooks Pingston, our QEP Coordinator, or me to set up an appointment: Anna.Jones@ucf.edu; Brooks.Pingston@ucf.edu; 407-823-1342. We look forward to chatting with you!



This is BIGS: Integrated General Studies and Expanding Pathways for Students

Wayne Bowen



Wayne H. Bowen is Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies program and Professor in the Department of History. He served as the Chair of the History Department and Director of University Studies at Southeast Missouri State University. He has extensive experience developing strategies and leading programs and units that position students for academic success.

Even at UCF, where many dreams come true, a student's path to a specific degree can face obstacles: changing curriculum, family commitments, relocation outside commuting distance, financial constraints, work conflicts, medical challenges, or an inability to complete a required course. Every semester, students leave UCF within a few credits of graduating, but without a degree. **UCF also has students whose objectives do not fit neatly into existing degrees; they see a path ahead combining disciplines, but do not want to spend 6–7 years completing multiple programs.**

For students in these categories, UCF offers a new major effective with the 2019–2020 academic year: a Bachelor's degree in Integrated General Studies (BIGS). To earn BIGS, students must complete all UCF-wide degree requirements, including GEP, Gordon Rule, residency, and upper-level hours, as well as two online core courses, LDR 3115 (Contemporary Issues in Leadership) and IDS 4939 (Senior Seminar). **In LDR 3115, students apply leadership theories to their career and academic endeavors. In IDS 4939, students employ multidisciplinary research methods and complete a capstone project showcasing their curricular achievements and professional objectives.** The remainder of the degree follows a flexible and self-designed curriculum; students select courses in consultation with professional advisors.

To declare BIGS, students must have at least 75 earned credits and meet with an advisor from the College of Undergraduate Studies or Knights Student Success Center, who work with students to identify the best path forward, keeping the current major or declaring BIGS. If you encounter students struggling with their current degree, whose situation could benefit from a more flexible curriculum, encourage them to consider BIGS. If a student has completed nearly everything we require on the path toward a degree, but encounters a challenge they cannot overcome in their major, BIGS can be an alternative, providing hope for a degree where there was little. To borrow from a recent UCF marketing pitch: This is BIGS.

When Students Build the Course Syllabus: The Things We Learn

Sandra Sousa



Sandra Sousa is Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures and the Latin American Studies Program. Her research interests are colonialism and post-colonialism; race relations in Mozambique; war, dictatorship and violence in contemporary Portuguese and African literature; and feminine writing in Portuguese, Brazilian, and African literature.

At the end of Fall 2018, I was teaching an advanced—level 3000—Portuguese class. Most of the students had been taking my classes for already a few semesters and I felt, as the break approached, the need to shake things a little bit. Maybe I was running out of ideas for the following semester. For sure, I didn't want students to fall into a monotony as that can happen if you have the same professor over and over again. As much as I knew that students appreciated my classes, I didn't want to fall into the idea that can be summarized as, "I already got them, so I don't really need to do anything else to conquer them." Accommodating ourselves can be a recipe for disaster. I started thinking once again on what could I do to improve my classes in the following semester, how I could keep my students engaged in what would be their last semester with me, and what I could give them that they could take for their lives; in short, how could I make their last semester with me memorable and impactful?

It was then that an idea came to mind. I was going to let students have more agency not just in the classroom—I already had done that by using Reacting to the Past mini-games developed towards language learning—but "outside," by allowing them to build the syllabus for the Spring 2019 semester. It was a risky idea, I accept. A scary idea, for sure. Nonetheless, I have learned during my time at UCF that taking risks in my classes can take me, and my students, to another level of learning experiences.

It was the last day of classes and I had told my students that we were going to do something different to end the semester. Their eyes showed expectation: what was I going to come up with this time? I seated them in a circle and told them that they were going to build the syllabus for the next class. Of course, I would write it, but the ideas, type of assignments, percentages for those assignments, would come from them. I just had one "imposition": they would read a whole book in Portuguese during the semester. First, there was shock. They could not believe that I was allowing them to have all that power of decision in a classroom. Nobody during their time at the university had even come close to considering giving them such

a task. Then came the excitement. It was something inexplicable. Just to live that moment was worth it to have taken that step. As we sat in a circle and students started to give their ideas, to share what they wanted to do, to assign percentages for the assignments they had chosen, I realized that our students, in opposition to what we tend to think, are not lazy, or irresponsible. In reality, this small group of people wanted to work more than is recommendable during the semester. Their excitement in participating was such that they were forgetting that they also have other classes and other work to do. I had to apply the brakes and let them know that if we were to do everything they were suggesting, it would be too much work (also for me—I am not going to be hypocritical!). And here are the things I learned. First lesson: students chose to do more work than less if they are given the choice of what to do. It is a big surprise, no?

Second lesson learned: students are creative in their choice of assignments. Also a big surprise! My students, being deprived of role-plays for a semester, wanted to go back to them. I decided that we were going to build the role-plays around the fictional book—based on the post-independence of Angola—that we were going to read, and that they were going to be the book characters. They decided what topics they wanted to discuss in order for me to create the games. They also suggested an assignment with songs that would be a competition (they would post songs on Webcourses every other week dedicated to some topic such as “the most romantic/sad/happy...song”), an e-portfolio where they would write fictional narratives, poetry, pages of diaries, etc. They wanted to do oral presentations on cultural topics and have grammar assignments. The list went on and on. They ended up doing most of it during the semester, and it was a positive experience. I saw a big improvement in their language skills, and they were able to even integrate vocabulary from Angola in their repertoire, besides expanding their understanding of the history and culture of Lusophone Africa. It is not so easy to read literature when you just have three or four semesters of a foreign language twice a week, but even struggling through another version of the Portuguese language, they read it all and asked for other book suggestions at the end of this semester. As one of my students said at the end of this semester: “Foi mágico!” (“It was magical!”).

A third surprise I have learned: when given the power, students are even more demanding than yourself. When discussing what percentage to give to attendance and participation, the unanimous response was: “100%. If you miss classes, you are done! It is important to be present and to participate. No missing classes allowed.” I was in total shock here and this made me think that either we have created monsters, or we have totally misunderstood them.

At the end of this semester, I gave the students a questionnaire about this experience. Comments such as, “It makes us more engaged”; “It was nice to be included”; “The more we participate, the more we learn”; “I felt honored”; “Excited to participate”; “Students have more input on the learning environment through assignments, goals and the rubric”; “Fun and innovative”; “I liked being able to incorporate various interests”; “It served as a challenge...”, were the norm. It was a challenge that we took together, a challenge that was worth taking, because when students take the lead, magic can truly happen.

Active-Learning Classrooms

Julie Donnelly



Julie Donnelly is a post-doctoral researcher in the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. She earned her Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Central Florida, and her research areas include teaching and learning in active learning spaces and chemistry education.

Classrooms across UCF campuses are being (re)designed with active learning in mind. Flexibility, decentralization, and technology integration are three of the top priorities. To ensure that the (re)designs are informed, the Faculty Center, Office of Instructional Resources, and UCF IT are collaborating to evaluate the use of an active learning classroom (ALC) specifically designed for experimenting with new pedagogies and technologies. The Faculty Center is interested in how teaching and learning interactions occur in ALCs and how those interactions are facilitated or hindered by the space. OIR is interested in which instructional and collaborative tools faculty and students are comfortable with and excited about. IT is interested in how to manage the software and security challenges that these high-tech rooms introduce. Thus, the Sandbox classroom (Classroom Building 1, Room 220) is not a template for ALCs at UCF, but a space for us to evaluate what furniture, features, and technologies should be scaled up to the rest of ALCs on campus.

In the Sandbox, tablet chairs and tables are all on wheels, making rearrangement of the space easy. There is no teaching console or podium, decentralizing the instructor and facilitating interaction between students and instructors. There are six LED displays mounted behind writable walls. Each display has a computer and multiple collaborative tools including Intel Unite, Solstice, Coalesce, AppleTV, Barco ClickShare, and Kramer VIA. Students can log in to the computer or any of the collaborative tools to share their work with their small groups

or (by screen sharing) the whole class. An interactive whiteboard allows instructors to annotate whatever is displayed or write digitally on a blank screen. These are just a few of the features that make the Sandbox unique.

The Spring 2019 semester was the first time faculty taught in the Sandbox. They participated in Faculty Center programming on ALCs, were willing to provide feedback to OIR and IT and participate in Faculty Center research, and were prepared for the technological challenges they were sure to face! Below, they will share their experience, lessons learned, and tips for teaching in ALCs based on their time in the Sandbox.

Living with the Sandbox

Matthew Bryan



Matthew Bryan is Associate Lecturer in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric at UCF, where he currently serves as faculty co-editor of *Stylus: A Journal of First-Year Writing*. He holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing, and his work has most recently appeared in *Writing about Writing: A College Reader* and *Next Steps: New Directions for/in Writing about Writing*.

For me, stepping into the Sandbox for the first time felt a little like test driving a new car. The bells and whistles—retractable sunroof (car), variable opacity smart glass (Sandbox), the ability to sync wirelessly with your phone (both)—stand out, but you can't help but wonder what it would be like to actually *live with it* for a month or more. After participating in Dr. Donnelly's highly useful and practical faculty development cohort centered on ALCs, I was grateful to have the opportunity in Spring 2019 to do just that.

The course I taught in the Sandbox was a mixed-mode version of ENC 3314: Writing and Rhetoric Foundations. Since it's a core requirement for students minoring in Writing and Rhetoric or earning a certificate in Public and Professional Writing, this writing-intensive course attracts students from a variety of majors. The class met once a week and was capped at 25 students. Given that small sample size, I'm hesitant to draw too sweeping conclusions about the impact of the space on students' learning, though students seemed to respond positively to being in the room (two out of the thirteen students who responded to SPoI surveys identified the classroom as one of the things they liked best about the course). What follows, then, are simply three observations based on what it was like to teach in the Sandbox for a full semester:

Observation #1: Viewing Angles Matter

Perhaps the two most immediately striking features of the Sandbox are the total number of built-in displays—nine—and the amount of open space. Together, these two features allow the Sandbox to accommodate a range of configurations while still ensuring every student a view of anything you care to project: desks and tables can be arranged to form discussion circles, rows, multiple stations, or—my favorite—a smallish discussion circle and tables in front of the six displays connected to individual PCs. This last setup allowed students to move easily between a full class discussion in the circle to group work at the tables during a single class session without rearranging furniture. With the click of one or two buttons on a touchscreen control panel, it was easy to unlock the screens from displaying the material I wanted in order to make them freely usable to students. While it was somewhat unnerving initially to have students looking every which way at displays scattered around the classroom, and I was worried whether or not the presence of all of these screens would create a sense of information overload—naïve, I know, when nearly every student comes equipped with at least one screen on their person, no matter how smart or active the classroom—the benefits soon became apparent.

The greatest benefit I found was not, however, the viewing angles for the screens, but instead students' viewing angles for each other. There's something powerful, I think, in students coming into class and rather than seeing the back of another student in front of them they see that student's face. This is possible in other spaces, but I haven't found it to be as easy, accessible, or natural as it is in the Sandbox. Students still arrived to class and pulled out their devices, but rather than be fixed onto them as they often seem to be, I noticed they were more likely to actually talk with their classmates before class began. These conversations weren't always about class material, of course, but I wonder what sort of impact these little moments had on students' feelings of belonging to a community of fellow learners.

Observation #2: Simple Technologies Lead to Valuable Collaboration

Of all the technologies in the Sandbox, the one I found most valuable for my instruction was one readers are probably already accustomed to: whiteboards. While whiteboards are, thankfully, a fixture of most of the classrooms at UCF, I found their implementation in the Sandbox to be especially clever and useful. One whole wall of the room is covered in glass, allowing dry-erase markers to be used from around knee-height to ceiling. This is the same wall that features five of the aforementioned PC-connected screens, and since these monitors, too, are behind glass, it's even possible to mark up whatever is being displayed there. I've never previously taught in a class that had so much whiteboard space so readily available to stu-

dents. This opened up new possibilities for in-class collaborative activities: instead of groups discussing or working on something and reporting out or navigating through tight rows to record some notes on the board in the front of class, they could stay at their tables and take notes on the wall as they talked. Students could also individually write a response to a prompt displayed on the screens before class on the nearest wall, and then spend a few minutes walking around and conversing with each other about what their peers wrote.

These boards and their placement around the screens were most impactful during peer review. Students pulled up each other's drafts on the screens, read them together, discussed, and recorded observations and questions they could then later bring to the full class's attention; students could also cast whatever was on their screen to all of the displays in the room, allowing for easy sharing of digital documents and images. I've done a version of this activity in traditional classrooms for years, but that activity has never worked quite as well as it did in the Sandbox, and I think that is a credit to how the technologies and their implementation in that space made this work visible. I could walk around the room and see what groups of students were reading and the notes they were recording, giving me a better sense of when I should sit in with a group and discuss a particular subject or area of concern. Rather than rely on a single note-taker, all students were responsible for keeping a record of their discussions, and they could all see the entirety of what their group had written on the boards. I found the setup of students sitting at tables facing one another also seemed to help them to stay present in their conversations with one another. Perhaps the best indication of the relative success of these activities in this space was the difficulty I had pulling students back together for a full class discussion once they got started in their groups.

Observation #3: An ALC Is a Space, Not a Pedagogy

Finally, I think it's worth remembering that the Sandbox—and I imagine any current or future ALC on campus—can be “just another classroom” if you want it to be. If you want to stand in front of the class and lecture, you can. If you want students to be in a discussion circle, they can be. Students will readily fall into whatever class structure you establish: the second day of class, I arrived to find my students dutifully rearranging the furniture to how it was set up on the first day, only to have to disappoint them with the news that we'd be trying something a little different that meeting. The term “ALC” describes the classroom, not the instruction. The space can be used however faculty and students desire, but they now have more options. I think it's that sense of possibility that I found most invigorating about teaching in the Sandbox. After a decade of teaching, I still find myself constantly questioning and revising course topics, readings, assignments, and activities. Rarely, though,

have I had the opportunity to think so deliberately about the affordances of the physical space of the classroom itself.

Clearly, more data and more impressions—from students and faculty alike—are needed. I find myself wondering most of all about the more intangible effects of a classroom like the Sandbox. How does students' sense of the intentionality of a space affect their learning within it? How does the awareness that a space is designed rather than hodgepodge impact an individual's feeling of belonging in the university? Ultimately, the answers to these questions will come down not to the design of a space, but rather the sorts of interactions that design enables. That's what makes the development of more ALCs on campus such an exciting one: as more students and faculty learn to live with these spaces, I look forward to hearing about the new opportunities for learning that they create together.

Social Platforms in the Sandbox Classroom

Emily Johnson



Emily Johnson is Assistant Professor of Games and Interactive Media. Her research focuses on educational technology of all flavors, including PC, VR, AR, MR, nontraditional interfaces, and everything in between.

First Impressions

On the first day of my 8:30 a.m. class this spring, one of my early arrivals walked up to me, wide-eyed. She bent down over my desk and whispered in awe, “What *is* this place?!” as if she had just walked into Narnia in the middle of Classroom Building 1. For a Digital Media major like her, I'm sure the Sandbox classroom did seem to be full of magic. One of the walls is composed entirely of glass, which can be frosted with the flick of a switch. The projector screen descends in front of this wall, and the remaining three walls contain several large flatscreen displays, all controlled by a tablet that is stored on the wall. Student seating in this space includes tables, chairs, and desks, all of which are on wheels.

From what I could tell, my students' first impressions of the space were all generally positive; certainly compared to some of the older classrooms on our sprawling campus, the Sandbox classroom definitely is new and exciting.

In this classroom, I taught DIG 3146, Social Platforms, which is a class designed around the study of social media. This is a new course for my department and focuses on the design of the platforms themselves as well as data analysis of the con-

tent they contain. We used free software called Orange and Gephi and created Twitterbots that used procedurally generated text and images.

As silly as it may sound, I was most excited about the classroom's mobile tables and chairs. After suffering through a fall semester where I tried to teach a group project-based course in a lecture hall with chairs that were bolted in place, the endless possibilities for the desk spaces were a dream come true. My teaching style is heavily social-constructivist, which means I prefer to have my students actively working together rather than staring at me while I ramble. I arranged my desks and tables in groups near the large screens, which created automatic groups. This provided each group with its own display and writing surface (all surfaces around the screens consist of dry-erase glass).

A Room with Many Views

In almost any configuration in the Sandbox classroom, you can see a number of screens from your chair. This helps immensely with PowerPoint slides and other visual aids. When I did live demonstrations on how to use new software or how to code a Twitterbot, students could easily read what I was typing. The slight delay from my computer to the monitors actually helped a little bit (once I realized it was occurring), since I type a little faster than I can explain what I'm typing. The screencasting software I preferred to use—Solstice and Intel Unite—allowed me to choose to share my whole desktop or just one application window. This single-window option allowed me to keep my notes in my view but not my students'. It might seem like a minor feature, but this prevented me from typing and explaining the wrong things, kept me on track with my lesson plan for the day, and allowed me to increase the size of the font on the room's displays.

I really enjoyed these demonstration days, where my students were participating hands-on with the content. They were all looking at their own screens (their laptops and the wall displays), actively engaged with the lesson, trying their hands at the new digital tool of the week. I could walk them through a complicated coding procedure step-by-step and be sure they were all close enough to the screen to discern the difference between a comma and a semicolon—a punctuation mark that can make or break a line of code and often requires excruciating zooming in and out when using a single screen in the front of the room.

The multiple screens do not only display the same thing at the same time, however; they are each connected to individual computers. This feature allowed each group to collaborate on their "personal" flatscreen display and be sure that eight people were not squinting to read just one group member's laptop. Additionally, once group time has concluded, I can use

the display control tablet to project any group's screen onto all of the screens in the room simultaneously—so each group can explain their work while the entire class has an up-close and personal view of it.

With a full house of 54 students, group work was a necessity, and with 54 chairs, if all of my students were present, I did not have anywhere to sit. I knew this would be the case before the semester began and planned accordingly. Happily, I was also able to arrange the chairs to ensure an empty table, so that I always had somewhere to safely house my laptop (and coffee!) on the off-chance that my class was fully attended at 8:30 a.m.

There's always another way

To quote *Finding Dory*, "There's always another way!" This is my mantra when using any technology. As with pretty much anything manmade, the things in the classroom did not always work perfectly all of the time. Honestly, I was expecting far more frequent and devastating technical issues to occur throughout the semester than I actually encountered. We were lucky in that the wireless internet never completely dropped on us. It was slow at times, but this happens everywhere.

A few times, I had trouble with the audio of video clips—it would only play through my laptop speaker—but I simply put the microphone next to my laptop, and that, in conjunction with the closed captioning feature (which I advocate should *always* be on when showing video in class), sufficed. Occasionally, a monitor did not seem to want to turn on, but with so many other options, this was never an issue, unlike classrooms with single displays. I also learned the trick of using the remote control to manually power on individual monitors that did not want to cooperate, and this usually worked.

Because I was teaching a brand-new course, I was not able to experiment as much as I would have liked with all of the possibilities of the space. I simply utilized the classroom features that I felt would best enhance my instruction as well as I could. This is always my approach to new teaching tools—content first and technology second, but I do regret not coming up with a few more activities where students utilized their group screens for *doing* rather than *viewing* more often.

Takeaways

In my experience, the Sandbox classroom had major advantages with mobile desks and multiple screens, facilitating a variety of different types of pedagogy. In-class group work that can be completed on the group monitors and then displayed and discussed with the whole class work well in this space. Group work of this nature can help a larger class feel more intimate and provide students with personal connections to their peers. The opportunity for feedback from the entire class with a click of a touchscreen is also valuable, and can

help groups stay focused on creating something in the allotted time that they are proud to share with the larger class.

The microphone system also proved to be extremely beneficial. I always advocate using classroom microphones and think every single classroom should have one. Not only does microphone use help to create a calm, professional tone in the classroom (and avoid the feeling that I am shouting at my students), but based on standard hearing examinations, 1 in 8 people over 11 years of age has hearing loss in both ears (National Institute of Health, <<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing>>). It helped when I was unable to project the video clip audio through the main speaker source, and the closed-captioning on multiple monitors also ensured that all of my students could easily read the closed-captioning on my video clips. All of this helped increase the inclusivity of the space.

The mobile desks and chairs also helped with physical inclusivity in the room. One of my students used a motorized wheelchair and was able to sit in the middle of a student group. In many classrooms, this student would not have had that option. Many traditional classrooms' physical layouts limit these students to the outside edges of groups or the end of rows—literally marginalizing them. In the Sandbox classroom, my student was able to have someone remove a desk from the middle of a clump of desks and position themselves in the center of a group.

Finally, the state-of-the-art technology and modern aesthetic of the classroom in general seemed to help my students feel as though they were valued by their university. This is a feeling all of our student spaces (and faculty-student interactions) should inspire in each of our students. I was appreciative of the opportunity to work to innovate my teaching in this experimental space, and I am excited to take what I have learned from this experience to the new downtown campus where I will be teaching this Fall!

Team-Based Learning: Developing Online Collaboration

Amanda Blom and Cynthia Mejia



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Dr. Cynthia Mejia is an Associate Professor and the Interim Chair of the Department of Foodservice & Lodging Management at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. With two decades of expertise in food & beverage and hotel operations management, at Rosen College Dr. Mejia teaches Facilities Management, Food Supply Chain Management, Techniques of Food Preparation, and Culture & Cuisine. Her areas of research include human resource management, cross-cultural organizational management, and technology acceptance in hospitality organizations.

Team-Based Learning (TBL) is a highly effective learning strategy as an alternate to didactic sessions. TBL aims to go beyond content coverage—it creates the opportunity to solve problems in conjunction with content. It encourages students simply based on the structure to share their knowledge, deepen their understanding, and interact with their peers.

The TBL model is compartmentalized into three phases - Individual Readiness Assessment (IRAT), Group Readiness Assessment (GRAT), and Application Focus Exercise (AFE). The IRAT validates students have individually mastered the identified objectives through a brief multiple-choice exam. At the close of the IRAT, students immediately transition to the GRAT. Students will answer the same questions presented on the IRAT, however, with other students (approximately five to seven per group).

In the final phase of TBL, the AFE, students attempt to synthesize the information gathered (based on the I/G RAT questions). Facilitators want students to either choose, critique, or create in this phase. The AFE is most effective when following the 4S Framework—significant problem, same problem, specific choice, and simultaneous report. The significant problem or scenario presented to students should be meaningful and complex. It also should be the same problem for all groups. Each group should be required to make a specific, collective choice, which will create the space for simultaneous reporting to other groups. Characteristics of an effective TBL are

well-designed groups, student accountability (in individual and group assessments), and facilitator feedback.

As education becomes increasingly more technologically driven, this trend illustrates the eventuality that all TBL components will move online. Current hybrid and full online TBL best practices transitioned the IRAT and GRAT phases to online implementation over a decade ago (Gomez, Wu, & Passerini, 2009); however, the AFE phase continues to stump facilitators ubiquitously. While the 4S's pose unique challenges in the full online environment, we can find solutions to meet the needs of significant problem, same problem, and specific choice. Where the AFE phase encounters a challenge is with one "S" in particular: simultaneous reporting.

Dubbed "online TBL" by Clark et al. (2018), the AFE phase is described as both asynchronous and remote, which does not require that students communicate simultaneously, and may also inadvertently extend the parameters of traditional simultaneous reporting. In a face-to-face or hybrid course, simultaneous reporting immediately follows the completion of team tasks in the AFE phase, as the groups report out their logic and engage in rigorous discussion and debate. In online TBL, due to the requisite structure of simultaneous reporting in order to activate enthusiastic discussion, the facilitator must monitor and constrain the release of the groups' reports until all groups have completed the task (Clark, et al., 2018). Depending on the capabilities of the learning management system or third-party software, control of simultaneous reporting might not be in the hands of the facilitator, but rather will be controlled by the groups themselves. In the case of the latter, best practices recommend to set a report deadline for the groups, followed by a strict process where all groups release their reports simultaneously to a discussion platform (Clark, et al., 2018). It is also recommended that online TBL simultaneous reporting be supplemented with additional documentation as to the rationale of each team's reporting choices.

To launch the online TBL process in its entirety, there are several solutions which may work independently, or in parallel to achieve the desired results. Multiple resources, including software solutions, are suggested on the Team-Based Learning Collaborative website (<www.teambasedlearning.org>). Intedashboard (<www.intedashboard.com>) is one such platform designed specifically for TBL educators to deliver the IRAT, GRAT, AFE, and peer evaluations with automated grading capability. This platform integrates with most LMSs, and works on mobile devices. Payment structures are proprietary at the institutional level; however, there are also individual student plans.

Voicethread (<<https://voicethread.com>>) has the potential to offer groups a robust simultaneous reporting experience uti-

lizing text-based, voice, or video functions, recorded to the cloud software. The advantage to Voicethread is that it enhances engagement, as students can view the video responses of their peers and/or listen to each other's voices in the discussion prior to or after simultaneous reporting. Facilitators have many options as to how the group's discussions can be published within an online course, and shared across the groups. Pricing for Voicethread is moderate, and can be acquired with a single instructor educational license (\$99 per year for 50 student accounts and \$2 per each additional student), or with an institutional site license.

Google Drive either on its own, or in conjunction with Facebook, Twitter, or collaborative applications within an LMS, offers a workable and free solution. In this solution, the onus of responsibility is more heavily placed on students to execute not only the content, but also manage the timing and release of the simultaneous reporting. Given that Google Drive is an external application, which may or may not be linked to an LMS, students will be directed to work outside the LMS platform, and with the help of synchronous social media, they may find the simultaneous reporting phase more engaging. Of course, this introduces a mandatory synchronous component; however, the complications of managing multiple platforms may be attenuated through the use of social media, which the younger generational cohorts are more comfortable using.

Regardless of the TBL platform delivery in the full online mode, it is worth trying various strategies to overcome the perceived barriers of simultaneous reporting in the AFE phase. Perhaps some disciplines are more partial toward one or more of the online TBL solutions offered above. The continuous trend toward online learning in conjunction with the rapid rise of technology will ensure more pointed and cost affordable solutions, which undoubtedly will be able to solve the online TBL issue with simultaneous reporting.

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The Vault is Open! UCF's Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository (TOPR) is an (Open Source) Treasure of Online Teaching Strategies

Shelly Wyatt and Alyssa Albrecht



Dr. Shelly Wyatt joined the Center for Distributed Learning at UCF as a full-time instructional designer in November 2016. Before joining CDL, she spent more than 15 years teaching courses in the humanities at several colleges, including DeVry University, Valencia College, and Seminole State College. In addition, Shelly worked at Rollins College (Olin Library) and at the American Psychological Association (book publishing division).

Alyssa has been a Knight since 2008 when she started her undergraduate degree at the University of Central Florida. Upon completing her Instructional Design and Technology MA, Alyssa began her journey as an Instructional Designer at UCF's Center for Distributed Learning. Her research interests include active learning, quality in online courses, and faculty-ID relationships. In her spare time, Alyssa enjoys spending time with her friends and family at Disney, traveling, and reading.



Launched in 2011, the Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository (TOPR) serves as a dynamic public resource for faculty and instructional designers who are interested in seeing examples of their colleagues' effective online strategies as well as sharing their own successful online teaching strategies (Thompson & Chen, 2013). Each TOPR entry is shared under the terms of a Creative Commons license; this allows others “to remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms” (Creative Commons, 2017). So, faculty from anywhere in the world can readily adopt and adapt TOPR strategies for their courses. In 2013, Drs. Kelvin Thompson and Baiyun Chen received the 2013 Sloan-C (now

Online Learning Consortium) Award for Effective Practice for their work on TOPR, confirming that the repository is a valuable resource for online instructors everywhere.

From the beginning, the structure of all TOPR entries has remained consistent: describe an online teaching strategy, share artifacts that have been used to support that strategy (e.g., templates, Powerpoints, rubrics, instructions for students), identify how strategy aligns with findings from research or professional practice literature. The degree to which a strategy is impactful or replicable is an important factor when determining if a strategy is a good fit for inclusion in the repository.

Strategies on the TOPR site (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/>>) are organized around three broad categories: Course Content, Interaction, and Assessment. Here are some examples from each category:

Course Content:

- Use Problems to Anchor Course Content to Real Life Discipline Practices (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/pbl-problem-type/>>)
- Providing Student Choice: Adopting an eTextbook in Your Online Course (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/providing-student-choice-adopting-an-etextbook-in-your-online-course/>>)
- Use Videos to Illustrate Complicated Conceptual Knowledge (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/180-2/>>)
- Applying Motivational Design Principles to Create Engaging Online Modules (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/applying-motivational-design-principles-to-create-engaging-online-modules/>>)
- Supporting Students to Use Multimedia in Discussion Forum (<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/r_3qwrq6edqxd5p2k/>)

Interaction:

- Student Generated Blogs to Facilitate Discussions (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/blog-as-a-reflection-tool/>>)
- Use Digital Communication Tools to Enhance Online Communities of Inquiry (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/use-digital-communication-tools-to-enhance-online-communities-of-inquiry/>>)
- Use Digital Posters for Online Community Introductions (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/use-digital-posters-for-online-community-introductions/>>)
- Foster Peer Review Using Online Discussion (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/foster-peer-review-using-online-discussion/>>)
- Managing Student Interaction with Sign-up Sheets (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/managing-student-interaction-with-sign-up-sheets/>>)

Assessment:

- Evaluate the Usefulness of Technology Tools in Teaching and Learning (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/evaluate-the-usefulness-of-technology-tools-in-teaching-and-learning/>>)
- Require Online Exit Tickets for Active Engagement (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/require-online-exit-tickets-for-active-engagement/>>)
- Use Self-tests to Guide and Motivate Students' Learning (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/self-test/>>)
- Foster Meaningful Learning with Renewable Assignments (<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/r_1h7ucljsasbkbsd/>)
- Digitizing Gallery Walks: A Method for Student-centered Feedback and Engagement (<<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/digitalizing-gallery-walks-method-student-centered-feedback-engagement/>>)

Annually, TOPR editors open a call for submissions, encouraging professionals in higher education to share their expertise with others, specifically focused on strategies in the online environment. Selected entries will be published on the TOPR website and featured in special posts for the University of Central Florida's Digital Learning Twitter page. Submissions will be considered via a peer-review process. This year's call for submissions opened on July 31, 2019. All entries must be submitted via the form found on the TOPR website by September 3, 2019.

Upon recommendations provided by reviewers, decisions will be made to determine entry inclusion in the repository. TOPR Editors encourage all those with innovative approaches in the online environment to explore published strategies within the repository, formulate an entry, and submit to join the many leaders in the field who have already influenced practices online.

References

- Creative Commons. (2017). *About the licenses*. Retrieved from <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>>
- Thompson, K., & Chen, B. (2013). *Enhancing faculty development through integrating the Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository*. Retrieved from the Online Learning Consortium web site: <https://secure.onlinelearningconsortium.org/effective_practices/enhancing-faculty-development-through-integrating-teaching-online-pedagogical-re>

Submissions

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty members to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay. See the guidelines for submission online at <<https://fctl.ucf.edu/teaching-resources/faculty-focus/>>. Please send your submissions to fctl@ucf.edu.

The ideas and opinions expressed in the articles featured in the *Faculty Focus* belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Faculty Center or of UCF.



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