

Lessons Learned from the Fall

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Outline for Today

- What our students said about the fall
- Tips for faculty to respond to those concerns
- Resources to help you prepare



Center for Academic Success & Transition (CAST)

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402-472-1880

- Open to ALL students at UNL (formerly First-Year Experience & Transition Programs)
- Help with academic success skills, transition support, making connections & creating support networks, and life skills
- Topics include:
 - Time Management
 - Study Skills
 - Test Prep & Test-Taking
 - Reading and Note-Taking Skills
 - Procrastination & Motivation
 - Stress Management
 - Critical Thinking

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- **1-1 Coaching:**
 - Offered in-person or Zoom
 - Follow-up and/or recurring appointments encouraged
 - Schedule via MyPLAN or by calling 402-472-1880
- **Academic Success Workshops**
 - Scheduled weekly each Fall & Spring (on hold for Spring 2021 due to COVID)
 - Available on request - <https://success.unl.edu/academic-support/presentation-request-form>
- **Success Tip Video Series**
 - Released every Monday on CAST social media (@UNLCAST on Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram)
- **Special Population Support**
 - First Husker (first-generation students)
 - Emerging Leaders (scholarship recipients)
 - Nebraska Promise (scholarship recipients)
 - Transfer Students
 - International Students

CAST Coaching Fall 2020

Trends & Numbers

- **Coaching appointments**
 - Average Fall appointments (since 2015) - 868
 - Fall 2020 Appointments - 1020
 - Zoom - 588
 - In-person - 432
- **Most common topics**
 - Time Management/Organization
 - Study Skills
 - Motivation
 - Personal Issues

CAST Coaching Fall 2020

What we knew & What we learned

- **What we knew (typical transition issues)**
 - Time Management & Organization
 - Understanding expectations
 - Connecting with peers/staff/faculty
 - Recognizing the need & asking for help
- **What we learned (Fall 2020 changes)**
 - Schedules were even more complex and hard for students to navigate & keep track of.
 - Lots of constant changes in classes, schedules, assignments, etc. made it more difficult for students to understand what was expected of them.
 - COVID restrictions and social distancing led to increased feelings of isolation and made it difficult for students to connect with others.
 - Finding and accessing resources was even more difficult. Students also felt so overwhelmed that it was hard to motivate themselves to seek help.

3 principles for helping students this spring

- Be clear about the purpose & rationale of all assignments and activities
- Help students understand the coherence & flow of your course
- Keep students on track for long-term projects & assignments

Principle 1:

Be clear about the purpose & rationale of all assignments and activities

Instructors do not give 'busy work'

Students often perceive important assignments as 'busy work'

Why the disconnect?

Principle 1:

Be clear about the purpose & rationale of all assignments and activities

How do we convey the importance of course work to our students?

- Add information to the top of each assignment
 - Which course objectives are fulfilled?
 - How will they use this skill in the Real World?
- Have students research skills & proficiencies necessary for those in the field
 - Reference this assignment throughout the course
- What, Why, How structure
 - Flower Darby, Small Teaching Online

Principle 2:

Help students understand the coherence & flow of your course

Our courses all have a logical flow that connects everything together

Each course also connects to the larger curriculum & discipline

Students often have a hard time 'seeing the forest for the trees'

Produces difficulty scaffolding skills over the semester

Principle 2:

Help students understand the coherence & flow of your course

How do we help students understand this structure?

- Refer to previous assignments often
 - 'In week one, you did X. Now I'm asking you to use that skill, along with Y, to do Z.'
- Use your lectures or announcements to connect the dots
- Use a stable example or case study that you build on over the semester
- Use a repeating structure on Canvas so that each unit has the same flow
 - Read, Watch, Do

Principle 3:

Keep students on track for long-term projects & assignments

Did anyone here have trouble keeping track of due dates in the fall?

Difficulty keeping up with grading?

Why was this so much worse than previous semesters?

Principle 3:

Keep students on track for long-term projects & assignments

For students, the cognitive load is even higher than for us:

- Multiple courses
- Different disciplines
- Different formats
 - Meeting sometimes in person, sometimes on zoom, sometimes asynchronous work
- Different Canvas organizational structures
- Different instructor contact preferences
- Oh, and Covid making them sick / requiring quarantine...

Principle 3:

Keep students on track for long-term projects & assignments

Students need to learn time management, but there are also easy things we can do to help them keep track of our class:

- Put due dates for everything in Canvas
 - Even Pages can be added to the to-do list!
- Remind students regularly about where they should be in completing large projects
 - And maybe break projects into small pieces so they're responsible throughout the semester

Canvas Examples

We'd like to show you some examples of how you can put some of these principles into place in your Canvas courses

Resources

- [Checklist for building a great Canvas course](#)
- [CAST resources](#)
- [Canvas 101](#)
- [Center for Transformative Teaching](#)
- Darby, Flower (2019). *Small Teaching Online: Apply Learning Science in Online Classes*.
- Lang, James (2016). *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*.
- [Teaching at UNL](#)
- Search under Eyde Olson in [Canvas Commons](#) for templates & orientation module

Questions?

Thanks for coming!!!