Dear Colleagues,

In these messages, I’ve focused primarily on our efforts to Keep Teaching remotely in ways that promote learning and academic success for students. I’ll address that topic in today’s message, but first I want to stress that at CSU our teaching mission intersects closely with our research mission. To deliver on the promise of what an undergraduate education at an R1 university offers, we draw on – and must pursue – our scholarly commitments as fully as we do our teaching commitments. The connections between teaching and discovery of course include conveying cutting-edge knowledge to undergraduates and involving them substantively in the research enterprise as often and as deeply as we can. Similarly, these connections require that we cultivate what I advocated in my most recent message, namely, students’ passion for disciplinary knowledge – and the means of discovering or producing it. To elicit this passion in students, we must live it out ourselves, pursuing our creative endeavors with the same energy we invest in teaching. It’s one of the ways in which we live out our dedication to our own lifelong learning!

Tacking back to practical advice, earlier we noted that administering a common exam synchronously will be impracticable in large-enrollment courses, given the challenges affecting students in the midst of COVID-19. Consider how you might replace such an exam with a series of quizzes, a group project assignment, a short but substantive writing assignment, or another approach to assessing learning.

Consider the creative suggestions on Alternative Assessments, which are well suited to lower-enrollment courses. For large-enrollment courses, the suggestions below can help protect the academic integrity of a Canvas Quiz given asynchronously:

- Include the CSU Honor Pledge as the first question, worth 0 points. Research shows that making students aware of an Honor Pledge reduces cheating.
- Set a time limit. Allow enough time for all students to complete the quiz, but not enough time for them to look up answers. When setting a time limit, balance the amount of time you expect the quiz to take against the recognition that students may be more susceptible to test anxiety than usual, especially if they feel crunched for time.
- Shuffle the order of answers. For example, answers associated with the letters a, b, c, d can be randomly shuffled from quiz to quiz so that students cannot simply share answers. If you use the shuffle feature, you cannot use choices like “all of the above” or “a and b,” as the answers will be in different orders for different students. Instead, offer a choice like ‘all answers’ and label every answer as a, b, c d, etc.
- Set the quiz to show one question at a time.
- Select whether and when you want students to see their responses and/or the correct answers after completing a quiz. Canvas: Let Students See Their Quiz Responses explains the options well.
- Require a password. Using a password helps deter students from "accidentally" starting a quiz, viewing the questions, and then asking for another quiz attempt. If they sign on with the password, they intentionally started the quiz.
- Write questions, even multiple-choice questions, that require high-level thinking/problem solving. This approach better simulates real-world situations where students will need to apply their knowledge. To take this approach, design backwards, beginning with the question, "what should students be able
to do (instead of know)?”. Craft a few questions that require students to demonstrate the requisite skills. This approach allows for shorter quizzes with more in-depth questions.

- Provide explicit instructions to students so that they know how much time they’ll have to complete the quiz, how many attempts they’ll have, what types of questions will be posed, etc. For example, knowing that questions will require higher-order thinking should prompt students to study not only to demonstrate recall but also to make connections and show critical thinking. Whatever question types you construct, consider prompting students to use TILT’s online study skills resources and science of learning videos. If you’ll ask students to demonstrate higher-order, critical, or integrative thinking, consider emphasizing that they may benefit from studying through elaboration and strategies for building understanding.

Find more specifics on using Canvas Quizzes:
- overview and quick links for Canvas quizzes
- security options in Canvas quizzes
- Canvas Instructor Guide and choose Quizzes from the Table of Contents.

I noted in the first paragraph above that our scholarly activities are a fundamental part of our professional lives: we do Learning for a living. It’s one of the main reasons we chose university life as a career. As I noted, learning and teaching are related – but they are distinct. You’ve heard the one about the guy who said to his friend, “I taught my dog how to drive the car last week!” “Oh wow, that’s impressive – I bet it’s fun to have him drive you around town.” “Well actually I didn’t say he *learned*….”

We’re starting to talk about finishing up the semester well, but we know that learning can’t stop at the semester boundaries: we’re committed not just to one exam topic, one course, one degree, but to life-long education, for ourselves, and for our students. Gandhi said to live as if you’ll die tomorrow – but learn as if you’ll live forever. That may be an overly grim statement as the entire world struggles with the virus; however there are lessons all around us now that illustrate both halves.

This week I heard an interview with an emergency doctor at St. Barnabas’ in the Bronx, not far from where my parents grew up, and where I was born and lived for a bunch of years as a kid. Dr Patti said that they were beginning to understand more about the tactics of dealing with very sick patients: how to optimally administer the oxygen, how to do the blood testing most efficiently, how to stage the various treatments to be most effective. He ended the interview by declaring “I’m a life-long student!”, with some pleasure mixed with the awesome gravity of his personal responsibilities.

He was teaching us something with those four words. It’s something we’ve learned; let’s make sure our students learn it too.

Stay healthy, keep learning, and stay tuned,

- Rick

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