TILT
Transparency in Learning and Teaching

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What is transparency?

Focus on **how** and **why** students are learning course content, concepts, and skills in a particular way, and how they will use that learning in their lives after college.

TILTing helps students to:

- Efficiently focus their (cognitive) attention on their learning and performance targets;

- Be clear about expectations for success (and how to earn a specific grade);

- Buy into the short- and long-term goals of their work.
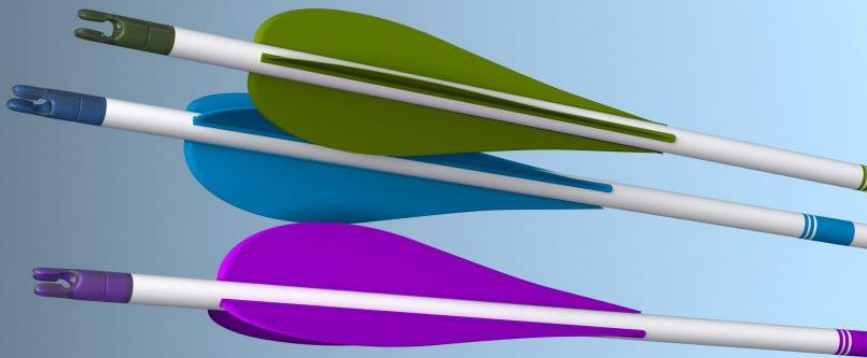
I actually spend a lot more time learning the material rather than devoting a lot of unnecessary time to unscrambling what I'm supposed to be doing.

- University of Nebraska student

Consider one of your current assignments

What common questions do you get from students about the assignment?

What makes an assignment transparent?

Purpose
- Uncovers relevance to students
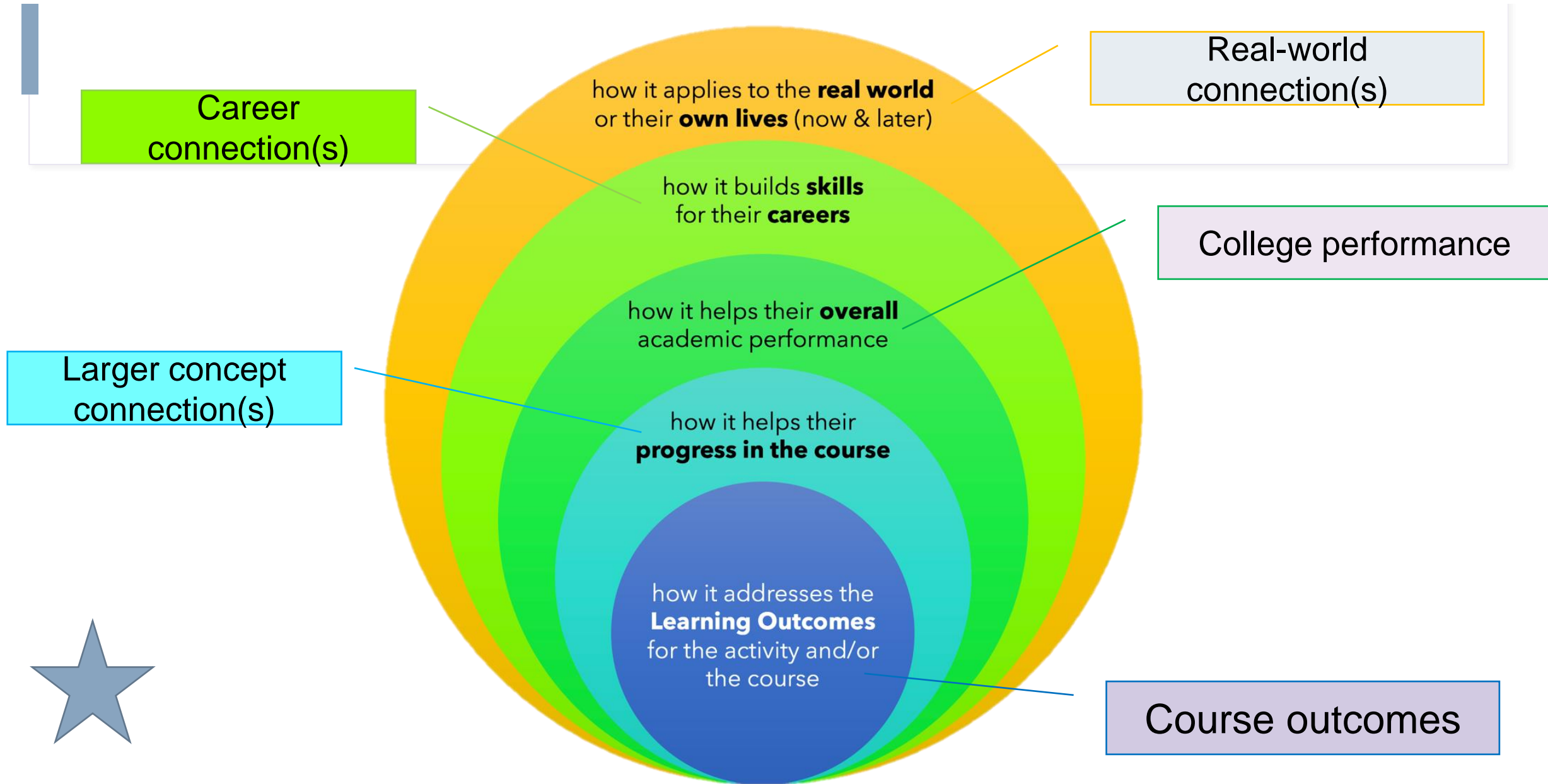- Connects to learning outcomes

Task
- Students know *what* to do
- Students know *how* to do it

Criteria
- Identifies specific expectations and criteria
- Provides examples & standards for success

Communicating the Purpose of Your Assignment

Real-world connection(s)

Career connection(s)

College performance

Larger concept connection(s)

Course outcomes

how it applies to the **real world** or their **own lives** (now & later)

how it builds **skills** for their **careers**

how it helps their **overall** academic performance

how it helps their **progress in the course**

how it addresses the **Learning Outcomes** for the activity and/or the course

Based on the transparency criteria, how transparent are your current assignments?

Let's practice

Underline the **purpose**

Circle the **task**

[Put brackets] around the **criteria**

PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

Your task is to explore a psychological topic in relation to your life, in a 3-4 page paper. Papers should be (a) double-spaced, (b) 12 pt Times New Roman font, (c) include your name in the header, and (d) a title at the top of the first page. Papers will be graded on the following criteria: (a) addressing the question / topic, (b) writing quality, (c) integrating outside sources (at least one quality source; if you are not sure whether something is a good source, ask me), and (d) following instructions.

TOPIC:
One of my goals in this course is to introduce students to ideas that can potentially change the way that they view the world. This can relate to any topic in psychology (e.g., how people learn, disorders of the brain, how memory functions, intelligence, what happens when we sleep, personality, how people interact with others, etc.), because psychological research is applicable to so many aspects of human life. Pick something that you have learned in this course that has changed the way you view the world. For example, imagine if on the first day of class I had asked you something like "how does short-term memory work?" and your answer then was very different than what you learned later in the semester from lecture/textbook. Think about the idea more deeply (especially in the context of your life), and apply it to your philosophy of life.

Once you have an idea, describe how you used to think about the topic, discuss the topic itself (i.e., what you learned about it), and then explain how your view has changed going forward. Please be as specific as possible when writing.

PSYCHOLOGY 101, David Copeland

CHANGING BELIEFS: TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT (end of term)

PURPOSE: One of my goals in this course is to introduce students to ideas that can potentially change the way that they view the world. This can relate to any major topic area in psychology (e.g., how the brain functions, how we perceive, how people learn, sleep and dreams, how memory functions, intelligence, personality, how people interact with others socially, or disorders). The purpose is to identify a topic for which your prior view of it has changed as a result of what you learned in this course. You should be able to compare and analyze how your thinking / beliefs are different now than before.

TASK: Your task is to: (1) Select a topic that you have learned about in this course that has changed the way you view the world. You are encouraged to refer back to your answers to the questions in the Changing Beliefs Activity from the beginning of the semester. (2) Once you have an idea, describe in a paragraph or two how you used to think about the topic. (Refer back to your responses to the Changing Beliefs activity from the beginning of term.) (3) Then, discuss the topic itself (i.e., what you learned about it). Please use the library to find an outside source – a peer reviewed psychology research article – to help you write a more thorough description of the selected concept. (4) Finally, explain how your view has changed going forward. Please be as specific as possible and please apply this to your own life and way of thinking (i.e., please do not generalize or write about how most people think).

Your completed assignment should be between 3 to 4 pages (typed, double-spaced). Include your name and a title in the header. Include a reference for your outside source at the end, using APA style formatting rules.

CRITERIA: Your assignment will be graded based on the following criteria: (a) Did you select a topic discussed in this course? (b) Can I clearly understand your prior way of thinking about that concept? (c) Do you provide a clear description of the topic that demonstrates that you can summarize the important aspects of it? Is information from the outside source nicely integrated into this description? (d) Can I clearly understand your current way of thinking about that concept? Did you contrast this to your prior view? (e) Finally, following instructions and quality of writing will be evaluated as well (e.g., proper grammar, spelling, etc.).

More transparent assignment example

How might more transparent assignments benefit students?

Peer Review, 2016

AAC&U and *TILT* Higher Ed Collaboration with 7 minority-serving institutions, 1800 students, & 35 faculty:

- 425 first-generation students
- 402 non-white students
- 479 low-income students
- 297 multiracial students

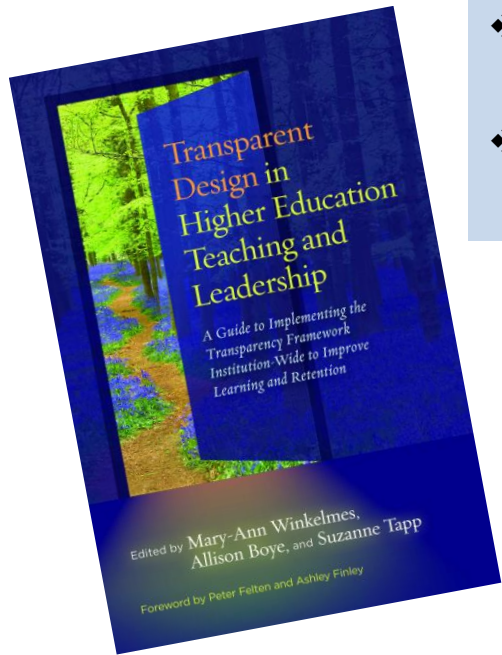**Faculty made just TWO assignments transparent.**

RESULTS

Increases in

- Academic **confidence**
- Sense of **belonging**
- **Skills** valued by employers

Medium to large effect for underserved students!

+ Longitudinal studies also show improvements in retention rates and GPA.

Key TILT Resources

- ❖ Winkelmes, M., Boye, A. & Tapp, A., eds. (2019). *Transparent Design in Higher Education Teaching and Leadership*. Stylus.
- ❖ https://tilthighered.com/

- Gianoutsos, D. & Winkelmes, M. (2016). Navigating with transparency: Enhancing underserved student success through transparent learning and teaching in the classroom and beyond. In A. Siha & S. Harrill (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Educators*.

- Howard, T. O., Winkelmes, M., & Shegog, M. (2019). Transparency teaching in the virtual classroom: Assessing the opportunities and challenges of integrating transparency teaching methods with online learning. *Journal of Political Science Education*. doi:10.1080/15512169.2018.1550420

- Winkelmes, M. (2017b, May 8). *Transparency and problem-centered learning* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqUQhSKmD9U

- Winkelmes, M., Bernacki, M., Butler, J., Zochowski, M., Golanics, J., & Weavil, K. H. (2016). A teaching intervention that increases underserved college students' success. *Peer Review*, *18*(1/2), 31–36. (https://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2016/winter-spring/Winkelmes)

- Winkelmes, M., Copeland, E. D., Jorgensen, E., Sloat, A., Smedley, A., Pizor, P., Johnson, K., & Jalene, S. (2015). Benefits (some unexpected) of transparently designed assignments. *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*, *24*(4), 4–7.

Are you ready to try it out?