



Chancellor's Learning Scholars Report

SMALL TEACHING ONLINE

Faculty Learning Community

2020 – 2021

Submitted by:

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Professor of Chemistry

Columbus State University

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Faculty Learning Community Members

During the spring 2021, I had ten faculty learning community members (including me). These diverse group of FLC include assistant, associate and full professors and a department chair. All members were full time faculty members at Columbus State University, except one. Five faculty members, namely, Drs. Kamau, Wakoko, Vondal, Dabke and Abegaz participated in the spring 2020 FLC and choose to continue this year. The names, disciplines and e-mail addresses of the participating FLC members are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Participating FLC members

Name	Discipline	Email Address
Dr. Alyce Cook	Modern and Classical Languages	cook_alyce@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Ben Kamau	Mathematics	kamau_ben@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Daewoo Lee	Political Science	lee_daewoo@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Florence Wakoko	Sociology	wakoko_florence@columbusstate.edu
Ms. Jaimie Gonzalez	Chemistry (Lecturer)	gonzalez_jaimie@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Jennafer Vondal	Criminal Justice	vondal_jennafer@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Jordan Brasher	Geography	brasher_jordan@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Rajeev Dabke	Chemistry	dabke_rajeev@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Hyeran Choi	Business	choi_hyeran2@columbusstate.edu
Dr. Samuel Abegaz	Chemistry	abegaz_samuel@columbusstate.edu

Attendance

The challenge of our FLC was to find a common meeting time to all members. In the spring 2021, one faculty member (Dr. Choi) attended the first meeting and then dropped out. Three out of 10 FLC members attend all the six meetings, five out of ten members attended five meetings, one out of ten attended 3 meetings. The details of the FLC attendance is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. FLC attendance

Meeting Sign-in Sheet								
		Meeting Date						
	FLC Member's Name	01/27/21	02/17/21	03/10/21	03/31/21	04/14/21	04/21/21	TOTAL
1.	Dr. Alyce Cook	X	X	X	X	X		5
2.	Dr. Ben Kamau	X	X		X	X	X	5
3.	Dr. Daewoo Lee	X	X			X		3
4.	Dr. Florence Wakoko	X	X		X	X	X	5
5.	Ms. Jaimie Gonzalez	X	X		X	X	X	5
6.	Dr. Jennafer Vondal	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
7.	Dr. Jordan Brasher	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
8.	Dr. Rajeev Dabke	X	X	X	X	X		5
9.	Dr. Hyeran Choi	X						1
10.	Dr. Samuel Abegaz	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	TOTAL	10	9	5	8	9	6	

Meeting Format

All FLC meetings were conducted via zoom. In the beginning of the semester we purchased Small Teaching Online books and distributed to all FLC members. In our first meeting, we introduced each other and talked about what we wanted to change in our online teaching, goal setting. In addition, we discussed to review each other's plan, give feedback and share ideas. Moreover, we talked about implementing the change during the spring 2021 semester and share the outcome.

During our subsequent meetings, FLC members were to read a couple of chapters from Small Teaching Book before the next meeting. During our meetings, we discuss the book chapters and share our experiences in online teaching and learning. In most cases, the meeting lasts longer than 2 hours and 30 minutes. This longer meeting is simple because of the interest of FLC members to engage and discuss online learning.

Invited Speakers

In addition to reading and discussing the Small Teaching Online book, during our last meeting, I invited Drs. Jennifer Knott and Randy Garve to share their expertise in online course design and teaching. The speakers highlighted the importance of clarifying expectations, keeping students engaged and Student commitment in online teaching. In addition, they emphasized the instructor-to-student interaction as a key teaching element in online teaching. They discussed this interaction before the semester and during the semester.

The speakers suggested that before the semester starts instructors need to update due dates for the current semester; ensure content / textbook edition is current; check linked materials to ensure links are correct and working; set up group activities with Groups tool; develop an e-mail introducing yourself; schedule announcements for the first week; and create a video introduction describing the course and how it will go.

During the first week the instructor needs to engage his students in the introduction discussion, responding to each student; include additional discussions required for a grade; export grade book as a spreadsheet to track individual students; and require students to submit a practice assignment.

The speakers suggest best practices for during the semester such as making sure instructors post announcements at least once a week; offer current news relating to a given topic; connect their own personal experience to the topic; post feedback and grades in a timely manner, as it helps students maintain a sense of progression; develop template responses; host a synchronous meeting to go over the expectations, record for those who can't attend; include personal input in their communication, such as how instructor apply a given concept in his/her professional life; and be vulnerable.

When it comes to vulnerability, the speakers pointed out that if instructors don't know the answer to their students' questions, it is advisable to tell students that I will find out. It is important for instructors to stay on top of the discussion boards; and reach out to students using the CougarVIEW Intelligent Agent tool or via e-mail.

Regarding student commitment, the speakers suggested that instructors need to keep in mind that students bring a level of commitment to your online classroom. Therefore, instructors may consider having students sign an agreement to submit work on time, always ask questions when they need to, understand your availability schedule, and no cheating. Students must be as committed as their instructors.

The presentation was extremely helpful to instructors who are teaching online courses and to those who are planning to give online classes in the future.

FLC Members Reflection

Ben Kamau, Ph.D.

FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)

Columbus State University

Small Teaching Online

Prior to spring 2021, I had taught Precalculus (MATH 1113) sections over several semesters including summer. In spring 2021, I opted to teach a Calculus I (MATH 1131) section in 50% hybrid format. The students attended 105 minutes of in-class instruction on Tuesdays and asynchronous instruction by Thursdays of the same week. This particular course Calculus I, is part of an ongoing Calculus project and so the mix of in-person and asynchronous instruction and interaction was deemed necessary for the project.

My Faculty Learning Community goal for this course was to draw parallels between a fully online course and a hybrid course with asynchronous component.

The course design included a pre-project assignment in which students are required to solve an application problem of optimization using prior knowledge and not content yet to be covered in this course. This served as advance organizer for the course-learning outcome to be achieved in a Calculus course. After the midterm, a post-project assignment was assigned with sub-activities that reflect on the content progressively covered in the course.

To build up the tools the students needed in this course; several milestones were put in place including online homework in WebAssign an LMS that provided students with an e-book, access to homework, media and optional study plan. Three Problem Sets of non-routine problems were assigned, aligning to the content and homework but going beyond what had been discussed in class by several sections. This was to provide opportunity for students to engage with new content as well as connect to the current content being covered in class. The Problem Sets were meant more for prompts to study ahead and exposure than assessment of material already learnt.

The design of the Problem Sets helped in determining what the students could and could not do. An aspect that became clear when several students came and asked for extension on particular Problem Sets with comments such as “I now understand better how to do it than last week” and “are we going to cover this topic in class?”

In contrast, this phenomena was not observed in the online homework which primarily was assigned (as exercises) and designed (after the content covered) to test what the students do or do not know.

Additionally, in online Precalculus sections taught in previous semesters these observations were not made.

My untested take on this is that with all the material posted and available for students in D2L; low-stakes assignments that require students to read ahead may create curiosity and sense of control of acquisition of the content knowledge.

In a bid to engage students in course activities a Calculus lab was created to utilize either Geogebra or Desmos-these are free download dynamic software that allow students to interact with the content. These assignments allowed students to use technology to explore content before presented in class.

Preliminary observation made was that students engaged more with interactive content in the Calculuslab, Webassign and instructional videos than with static content posted in D2L including PPT slides, notes and Problem Sets.

My take on this is supported in *Small TEACHING ONLINE's* “*Develop those objectives first, and then figure out which technological tools will help you and yours students meet them*”. The gap for interactive content was not very apparent in fully online or fully in-class courses I had taught before. But with the 50% hybrid Calculus course the learning outcomes, content and the design necessitated use of appropriate technology.

Another aspect that did not get the attention of students was the discussion forums. While these activities were meant to develop skills in interpretation and representation of mathematical ideas from one form to another, it was not surprising that students gravitated towards calculations and getting the answers correct more than the process and the meaning. My take on this is, creating opportunities for students to participate in structured discussions ranging from explaining basic ideas, describing processes to interpreting solutions will be “worth” their time, highlight the relevance of the content and increase coherence in interaction online.

The Faculty Learning Community with the resources of the readings and discussions that ensued regularly brought to the foreground for me the bits and pieces that I have encountered along teaching face-to-face, online and now in hybrid format.

Final thought: With the various delivery formats and instructional models that have gained prominence courtesy of COVID-19 and what is likely to be a paradigm shift for higher education, I would strive to in best of practices ‘teach online as if it were face-to-face’ and ‘teach face-to-face as if it were online or hybrid.’

Florence Wakoko, Ph.D.

FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)

Columbus State University

Small Teaching Online

Flower Darby and James Lang (2019) provided great insights for our discussions with topics on Course Design, Teaching Humans, and Motivating Learners in online classrooms. Since I had already designed my courses by the time I started FLC discussions, I picked up a few hints from the design section and focused on how to teach humans and motivate learners.

Teaching Humans - Building Community

In my Introduction to Sociology course (SOC1 1101) that I taught at Columbus State University in (SP 2021), I first tried to rely on examples from my experience with face-to-face courses to create a sense of community in this online course. However, I soon realized that this would not be achieved effectively. After our FLC discussions, I got examples from Darby and Lang (2019) and created group discussion assignments with the intention of engaging students and supporting their social and cognitive presence. I designed group discussions with the aim of generating interaction at multiple levels: students and course content, student and student, and student and instructor. Readings were uploaded in Word narratives, PPT pdf, and Audio-Video formats to increase accessibility.

Students had two weeks to work on each discussion assignment. Questions were designed in multiple parts to assess the students' understanding of key concepts, and their demonstration of critical thinking and knowledge application. The purpose of the discussion assignments was to give students opportunity to reflect on the course content and to draw examples from the readings, video clips, and from their own everyday life experiences in order to develop a growth mindset.

The assignment required students to post their discussion in the forum and to critique one of their classmate's discussions. I observed a growing sense of belonging, enthusiasm, and cognitive growth among my students as they engaged in peer-to-peer interaction. I read each discussion post as they came in and provided constructive comments while recognizing each student's culturally sensitive personal examples as my way of conveying caring support.

Motivating Learners

Although I engaged students in group discussions throughout my classes, I found the small teaching tips on how to motivate learners most relevant in my Sociological Theory course (SOC1 3103). Many students are anxious about sociological theory. They find theory to be very abstract and dull! In order to overcome their anxiety, I created **scaffold assignments** which James and Lang (2019) recommend using Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. Scaffold assignments are task oriented, and allow students to work on small scale on low-stakes assignments before they move to more complex high stakes work.

Low-stakes tasks were short quizzes which comprised of multiple choice and fill-in-the blanks questions. Quizzes were augmented by short online discussion assignments which engaged

students every two weeks. The goal was to help students understand simple basic concepts before moving to major tenets of each theory. I gave students the opportunity to have one-on-one meetings with the professor during the scheduled virtual office hours. I nudged students with weekly emails to update them about the course and I uploaded the same message in the announcements tab. By the time students came to work on the high stakes assignment, they had developed confidence in sociological theory based on the progress they had made on the quizzes, and the feedback that I provided on the discussions.

The high stakes assignment in this class was the development of a theoretical framework at the Midpoint of the semester. My goal was to ensure that students had a good understanding of how theory informs research in order to develop social policies. This was important because students would be able to develop a better understand of structural issues such as factors accounting for racial disparities in healthcare, persistent social problems such as uneven regional development, poverty and homelessness in the U.S. The high stakes project allowed students to engage in peer reviews and to consult with the professor more frequently. I graded this assignment using the rubric which I had discussed earlier with students.

Some of the conclusive remarks students made in this paper were:

“The theoretical framework makes sense to me now”

“ I now see why Dr. xxx talked so much about theory in our methods class”

“I am not sure I got this right but I enjoyed working on it”

Overall, I enjoyed learning and sharing with my colleagues in the Faculty Learning Community. Although this was my second time to participate in the FLC, learning about how to apply small teaching online was more rewarding.

I commend the effort and good leadership of our organizer.

Thank you for this learning opportunity!

Jordan Brasher, Ph.D.
FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)
Columbus State University
Small Teaching Online

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Faculty Learning Community during this Spring 2021 semester. I very much enjoyed the collegial environment you created, albeit online given the circumstances, for debate and discussion of the *Small Teaching Online* book by Darby & Lang (2019) as well as other strategies for improving teaching and learning in an online, hybrid environment. This brief letter outlines some of my reflections on our meetings this semester.

In a general sense, I really appreciated the opportunity to gather with fellow faculty with varying levels of teaching experience all the way from first year faculty like me to people who have been teaching for over twenty years. I feel that I benefitted from the space we created and the wisdom that more experienced faculty offered to me, and that I in return was able to offer fresh perspectives on teaching and learning that sometimes challenged or contradicted more traditional methods. We created a great synergy in the discussions. This was particularly important for me during what has been a difficult year to transition to the tenure track, living in a new state and teaching at a new university without the benefit of in-person formal and informal social gatherings that would allow me to get to know fellow faculty.

Second, I very much appreciated the discussion we maintained regarding assigning low-stakes assessments in the classroom. I had never really thought about assessment in terms of the “stakes” but it really resonated with me to think this way and challenged me to consider how I can give higher quality, more consistent feedback to students with these lower stakes assessments. I am already re-designing my Introduction to GIS class to move away from traditional higher stakes exams and toward lower stakes quizzes and practicums. I was inspired by the content of our book and our discussion of it to do this, and I think it will help ease the anxiety of students while giving them more thorough and consistent feedback.

Third, I enjoyed our discussion of “backward” design for course preparation, defined as created the course from the learning objectives. This is already helping me ask myself what I want students to accomplish in my classes and helping me wade through the morass of content I inherited from friends, mentors, and colleagues for the courses I’m teaching, which can feel overwhelming and ultimately impede me from meeting the objectives of the course. I am already thinking more pointedly about how to craft course material around the important skills students need to retain for entering the job market and the wider world as citizens, which helps provide me with more concrete ideas and move me out of the abstractness of concepts.

Finally, if there is one thing, I would perhaps like to see change about the Faculty Learning

Community meetings, it's that I would have enjoyed making the meetings a little more open-ended instead of being so centered around the book. The book felt like an extra task to add to my to-do list. As a very overwhelmed, socially isolated, first year faculty, I needed more of a space to express frustrations and verbally process how I'm feeling about my classes rather than another task to complete.

All in all, being a part of the Faculty Learning Community was a generative space that I benefitted from and enjoyed participating in. Thank you for the opportunity to get to know and learn from other CSU faculty in this way.

Alyce Cook

FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)

Columbus State University

Small Teaching Online

CONCEPT MAPS

In my SPAN 4175 class, I had students work in groups to map/draw out their ideas schematically for creating essay theses relating literary readings and films to our framework essay. I found the mapping especially useful for visually oriented students, who were allowed to let go of the standard linear model of paper writing, and experience seeing their ideas come to life on the page. During one of our mapping sessions, I experienced a reaffirming teaching moment when theory and practice converged. While I witnessed the focused attention of my students, one student who was an art major and Spanish minor remarked: “I think we should frame or exhibit this.” When I looked in on the student’s group to see what had caused the excitement, I saw that their document was covered with pictures, bubbles, words, and some arrows. I was impressed because I immediately saw that the document reflected an impressive organic order of its own. I felt a surge of success as a teacher. Pedagogical theory tells us that not all learners are the same, and their map proved it. So, in addition to teaching students how to outline their papers, I will also incorporate concept/mind maps into my teaching.

One of my teaching goals is to allow students the room to make the class their own. To this end, I have extended the mapping activity to help our class be less hierarchical. I ask students to use their concept maps to lead class discussions. Asking them to team teach seems to foster a sense of community among class members, and I am able to gradually remove myself as the central authority. As a consequence, students have to practice their Spanish and their analytical thinking abilities.

Via concept maps, I saw my students support each other in the various stages of the writing process. The beauty of this style of teaching is that it teaches them to value community, both personally and professionally. In addition, teaching via concept/mind maps matters because it plays a role in students’ intellectual development; the maps are tangible products helping students solve problems in the world around them. Perhaps most importantly, students have an opportunity to work in a medium meaningful to them, and to trust a diverse group of peers with their work. The maps enable students to take these risks.

Rajeev B Dabke, Ph.D.
FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)
Columbus State University
Small Teaching Online

Context:

Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact teaching and learning in higher education. Additional challenges particularly in the laboratory sciences where hands-on learning is crucially important, are critical. Replacing hands-on learning with an online experience puzzled the educators around the world. In view of Covid-19 and the faculty learning community (FLC) experience, I am presenting my perspective on online teaching experience.

Continued Transition:

I continued to transition to online teaching with a workload of three laboratories and two lecture class sessions. The curriculum included core and upper level courses. These sessions had a varied number of students from 8 to 48.

Platforms:

There were several platforms available for online teaching. I found *collaborate ultra* and *google* to be suitable for my instructions. Both these modules are user friendly and facilitate shared learning environment. I was particularly impressed by the effectiveness of google meet for implementing online office hours. I am using video camera, whiteboard, and shared files modules to converse with the students. I used chem21labs to implement laboratory exercise for my principles of chemistry laboratory class.

Faculty Learning Community:

I have been attending the FLC meetings presided by Dr. Abegaz. These meetings have been a great learning experience for me. We discussed various challenges in the online transition. We shared practicalities associated with laboratory learning experiences. These discussions were instructive and underlined the prospects of online education. The book by Darby and Lang (Small Teaching Online) was the focal point of discussion and faculty community members shared their valuable thoughts on various topic in the book. In particular the faculty expressed their ideas on connecting the content to their online teaching practices.

Assessment:

I used 'mastering chemistry' online assessment tool for my survey of chemistry class. As a part of the assessment in my general chemistry class, I gave students an online homework. The homework particularly reflected on the application of the course content to the real world. The assessment also aimed at measuring student success in the general education area. The general education assessment included an assessment of how students apply critical thinking, their analytical skills, application of knowledge and work to the society and real life. The results obtained so far indicate that 60% of the students in my class fulfil the general education goals in the *online* instructional methods. Similarly using online system of handling laboratory reports was a great was of monitoring students' success in the classroom and the laboratory.

Chem 1152L, Chem 1152, Chem 1212, Chem 4315, and Chem 1212L Course Reflections on Small Teaching Practice:

Creating short videos: I and my colleague developed short videos demonstrating the key ideas in the area of survey of chemistry lab. The short videos demonstrated key ideas of the concepts presented in the experiment. The videos also helped students envisage the experiment prior to actually perform the experiment.

Establishing teaching presence: One characteristic of an online mode of teaching is making the presence felt to the students. I took pause while delivering the content particularly asking online students if they follow the content as much as face-to-face students do. Asking questions and getting opinion from online student was a great way of establishing the teaching presence.

Nudge students in need of a little extra help: In the past semester, I nudged students by sending personal emails to the students and asking them if they need help with any specific topic they might have missed in the class. Also replying to student's email in a timely manner helped foster student success during the course.

Making connections: Undergraduate chemistry courses is a collage art of interconnecting pieces within chemistry discipline as well as the interdisciplinary approaches. In the past semester, I used specific references to interconnect biological chemistry with organic chemistry, physical chemistry with introductory physics, principles of chemistry with the real-world application of acids and bases, and biological chemistry with the periodic table. Giving practical examples helped students realize that the course content was relevant as well as interesting.

Prospects:

In light of the innovative teaching practices explained in the book authored by Darby and Lang, I will continue to apply them and explore new features to enhance my teaching experience in the online world. I will continue to use information I acquired from the FLC community members.

Daewoo Lee, Ph.D.
FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)
Columbus State University
Small Teaching Online

Overall takeaway:

After reading chapters and discussing strategies with the group, I realize how important my decision is in class, particularly in the online setting. The book reiterates the importance of alignments of learning objectives and module objectives, along with the well-intertwined class materials and activities. I had a rough idea or a big picture of the class outcomes alignments, but I think I need to re-consider those alignments.

Another takeaway is, incorporating video lectures. I ALWAYS avoided recording my lectures, mainly from my experience of taking an online class. I did not enjoy recorded lectures and cut it if it was too long. So, if I can make my recording somehow enjoyable to students, and relatively short, I could make the best of recorded lectures. Tips on recorded lectures from the chapter were really helpful. That being said:

Strategy 1

I plan to make a short recording: less than 5 minutes. From the book, I learned that it is important to make myself visible in the online class. I do not have to, and will not, literally lecturing the whole class. Short recording's main goal will be drawing attention from students and let me visible. I plan to let students also upload something, other than simply writing. It could be their recording, either video or audio. Or, it could be annotated articles. The purpose of this activity is to interact with students. I also want to let them visible in the classroom.

Strategy 2

I plan to go beyond CougarView discussion function. Of all functions of CougarView, the discussion post was one of my favorites. However, the chapters introduced interesting activities with related to the discussion. Using the perusall, I can let them comment and discuss the news article (a short one) with annotation function. I think it will bring another dynamic, different from CougarView discussion posts. Hashtags and voting function will be a fun activity for the students and I plan to maximize perusall's advantages by uploading some interesting and (intentionally controversial) articles to let them engage in discussions.

Jaimie Gonzalez, M.Ed.,
FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)
Columbus State University
Small Teaching Online

Being the first time participating in a Faculty Learning Community, I was not sure what to expect and how the assigned reading could possibly relate to my courses for the semester. COVID-19 quickly transformed my traditional introductory chemistry course into a hy-flex model of instruction, with some students attending physically each day while others attend remotely. The dual mode of delivery has brought to light issues regarding learning that were not considered previously under the tradition lecture model. A few of the strategies outlined in Small Online Teaching have proven beneficial to all students enrolled in the course and have provided me with excellent alternative approaches to my traditional teaching style.

Growing up in the dawn of the technology age, I have become quite comfortable with the variety and plethora of technical educational tools that are available and ever changing. Even for face-to-face courses feedback is provided in the form of videos for certain assignments, including exams. The personalized explanation and encouragement through video has a profound effect on students' attitudes and progression through the course. While they may score low on initial assessments, the personalized feedback video seems to foster self-confidence and build a sense of support that may not be conveyed in the large traditional lecture-style course. When they feel supported, students tend to participate in class more often and consequently have their misconceptions resolved that would previously go unanswered in courses where they did not feel a sense of support or community.

Conditional release (CR) has been implemented this semester in my laboratory courses' LMS. Students are not given access to the Assignment submission folder until they have viewed the pre-lab discussion video and submitted their pre-lab quiz. Once both tasks have been completed, only then will the submission folder be visible and the student able to submit their completed lab report. In past semesters, I have noticed that students would simply take the pre-lab quiz without watching the discussion video, resulting in low pre-lab scores and an overall misunderstanding of the experiment's learning objectives and technical theory (which is explained in the pre-lab discussion). By setting a CR for the submission folder, an increase in overall grades for pre-lab quizzes has been achieved compared to previous semesters. While our laboratory courses are not online courses, techniques outlined in Small Teaching prove to be useful for any mode of instruction.

One Small Teaching Online strategy that I will begin using in all courses, online and in person, will be the annotated syllabus as an interactive activity during the first day of class. I tend to review the entire document with the class, showing them exactly where and how to complete their homework, access lecture materials, and conduct their weekly quizzes. Regardless of this self-professed "in-depth" review of the syllabus, students will still ask questions throughout the semester that can clearly be answered by reading the syllabus. I am fond of the idea of letting students contribute to the design and requirements of the course, so annotating our syllabus in real-time will be our first day activity for my courses from now on. Allowing students

to pose questions in the form of comments and provide suggestions to the change in the structure of the course will give the students a sense of ownership of their learning, course outcomes, and graded requirements for the semester.

Small Teaching Online contains a plethora of invigorating ideas and suggestions designed to increase the effectiveness and quality of university courses. While geared to online courses, Darby Flowers' theories and models are the basis for great instructional design in all modes of delivery. Building a sense of community, communicating expectations clearly, and making connections outside of the course enhances any class and any topic. Participating in this FLC has expanded my knowledge base, reignited the passion for education that had been dimmed in the midst of COVID, and made me consider modifications that need to be done to my traditional delivery of material in order to support all students.

Jennafer Vondal, Ph.D.

FLC Participant (with CLS Samuel Abegaz)

Columbus State University

Small Teaching Online

Over the past semester, I have met with several colleagues virtually to discuss online pedagogical strategies. More specifically, we discussed small online teaching strategies and how we can improve these during the semester. I found the input and advice from these peers very valuable to my pedagogical style. Additionally, I felt comfortable to share my teaching experiences and techniques with fellow colleagues. The virtual meeting atmosphere was obviously not ideal but was very positive and welcoming which encouraged me to share my expertise and ideas as well as propose questions. Overall, this has been a great professional opportunity to develop and enhance my online pedagogical strategies. The ultimate goal is about how we can actively engage students to learn and retain the material.

I planned to implement some of the recommendations outlined in the book *Small Teaching Online* for CRJU 4169: Technical Writing in Criminal Justice to enhance the online learning environment for students. Some of the recommendations included: providing timely feedback, posting short videos, and communicating with students frequently through announcements or emails. These strategies are aimed to increase student engagement, improve student understanding of course material, and enhance communication between the instructor and students. For each assignment and assessment, I provided personal feedback highlighting things the student did well and areas for improvement. Furthermore, offering constructive feedback helps students to understand what course material they comprehend or still need to learn. This allows students to go review and reflect on the feedback and apply it for future assignments. Another recommendation from the book I implemented starting around Week 5 or 6 of the semester was posting short announcement videos. These videos outlined the upcoming week's course topics and assignments. Along with the video announcements, I would send an email all the details to ensure students had great accessibility to the material being covered each week. Also, I would post another announcement to remind students about the upcoming assignment or assessment deadlines. If I received numerous emails about an assignment, I would post an announcement that provided more guidance to decrease student confusion while ensuring all students had access to this information. This increases the communication and interaction with students as well. Each week I have a question and answer discussion board that encourages students to post questions pertaining to course assignments, material, or other topics. Then, I respond to the discussion post so all students can view it in case they have a similar question. Finally, I made sure to promptly respond to students inquiries or questions within at least 24 hours. Communication with online learners is crucial to their learning experience in the course. After the course evaluations are released, I plan to review the feedback to see if any of these pedagogical techniques are assisting students to learn and retain the information as well enhancing the online learning environment. The future plan is to implement these course additions along with a few other recommendations (short mini-lecture videos) next semester and assess if they are improving the student and online experience.

While attending these meetings, we completed a small teachings inventory to evaluate what pedagogical techniques we use and do not use in the classroom. After completing the

inventory, I discovered I utilize numerous strategies in the following areas for my online and hyflex classes: preparing to learn and hitting pause. Whereas, the first and last five minutes of class are areas of improvement. Again, I planned to use some of the recommended small teaching strategies but have to find an effective way to do so online. Three approaches I focused on: peer reviews, provide everyday examples, and scaffold an annotated bibliography. More specifically, I scaffolded an annotated bibliography into three parts: 1) rough draft; 2) peer review; and 3) final draft. This allowed students to get feedback on two separate occasions as well as reflect on another student's paper. Most of the assignments for this course relates directly back reports that criminal justice practitioners complete. By incorporating a few more small teaching recommendations will benefit my students learning and divide class time into manageable parts. This exercise really helped me evaluate my teaching strategies I already utilize and provide new ideas I can.

Since the pandemic is still going on it has limited my ability to implement some of the small teaching strategies as over half of my classes are either online or hyflex. This learning environment continues to be difficult for both students and faculty as it required us to be innovative with our teaching strategies in order to maintain student engagement and learning. Another challenge that still remains during this pandemic is trying to balance home and work life with three children. However, my focus remained on the students, their learning experience, and communication. Ultimately, my goal was to be accessible to students and maintain student engagement and learning.

The FLC meetings provided insight on what I could do to improve student learning in a virtual environment. The advice that colleagues gave was very valuable and I incorporated several recommendations. When colleagues asked for advice or input, I offered my advice and experiences. Overall, the FLC has enhanced my pedagogical strategies because of the innovative ideas and experiences of my colleagues and peers. My participation in the FLC is going to be beneficial to my future students and me even though I was not able to incorporate many of the small teaching online approaches and ideas. I plan to utilize many of these practical strategies next semester to foster student engagement and active learning in both face-to-face and online classes. I am glad I participated in the FLC as it aided in my professional pedagogical development and allowed me share my best teaching practices.

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Small Teaching Online

As a Chancellor's Learning Scholar and a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) facilitator, I picked Small Teaching Online as our topic. I had the honor and the pleasure of facilitating a small group of highly motivated, engaged and energetic faculty members at Columbus State University. In addition to the Master of Science program in Organizational Leadership (Leadership Development Track) that I completed in December 2020, the leadership experience that I gained through the CLS opportunity will help me to be an effective leader in academia. I enjoyed the communication that I had with my FLC. I believe that finding the time and place for faculty to get together and exchange ideas and talk about teaching and learning related issues promote creativity.

Around the end of fall 2020, I recruited nine faculty members across disciplines. In the spring 2021, all FLC members, except one (Dr. Choi), actively participated throughout the semester. In our first meeting, we discussed several issues related to online teaching. Our discussion highlighted the importance of faculty collaboration, which technology helps more for online courses and the challenges of online teaching and learning. We also discussed issues related to online exams, the use of lockdown browsers and webcam, and the quality of online teaching. FLC members also raised some questions such as "Which technology is best for social science or natural sciences"?, "Why students need 123 credit hours to complete their degree work?" and suggested a change to the current and make it suitable to the 21st century. We also stressed using simple and user-friendly technology for online teaching. However, the use of technology should not be confused with the content.

In the spring 2021, I taught Principles of Chemistry I lecture, Principles of Chemistry II lab, Instrumental Methods of Chemical Analysis lecture and lab courses. Each one of these courses involved technology in terms of online homework, quizzes, tests, exams, lab reports and virtual labs. There is no doubt that reading the Small Teaching Online book, and the constructive engagement with other faculty members across the colleges help me to improve my teaching. In addition, I learned a lot from our invited speakers. In order to learn more about online teaching and course design, our invited speakers suggested the importance of taking online courses. I agree with our speakers. I learn more about online teaching, while I was taking several online graduate level courses.

In order to achieve my goal for the spring 2021, I heartily explored small teaching online in my classroom. Among the list of small teaching online practices, I tried a few change in the spring 2021 for all my courses. The small teaching practices that I tried include:

- 1) Breaking down complex tasks,
- 2) Requiring peer-to-peer interactions in my class,

3) Assigning concept maps to help students see the connections between ideas.

These best practices in online teaching are so doable and had a major impact on student learning. For example, in the past, I used to give complex tasks. In the spring 2021, I breakdown the big and complex tasks in all my courses. This change was well received by my students and they did well in their online assignments.

Over the past two years, I learned a lot from small teaching online book and our FLC members as much as the other FLC members learn. In my opinion, our faculty learning community conversation was meaningful, and the members were supportive to one another. I believe that this kind of conversations about teaching and learning with supportive colleagues across disciplines should continue beyond one or two semesters. It is not only beneficial to instructors but also to our students.

In conclusion, I am extremely thankful the Chancellor of the USG and his team for the opportunity to have been a Chancellor's Learning Scholar for the past 2 years. I would also like to thank my FLC members for their sustained engagement, active participation, support and thought-provoking ideas; and Dr. Deborah Bordelon (Provost and Executive Vice President, Columbus State University) and Dr. Susan Hrach (Director, Faculty Center, Columbus State University) for their continued support and encouragement throughout this program. I strongly believe that my FLC was a success. All FLC members hope the program can continue because there is need. Faculty members need this kind of sustained engagement.

Reference

Small Teaching Online: Applying Learning Science in Online Classes, Flower Darby, James M. Lang (2019), ISBN: 978-1-119-61909-3, Jossey-Bass, Wiley.