Considerations and Best Practices for Online Instruction

For Summer and Fall 2020, some classes were scheduled face-to-face and hybrid with regular meeting days and times while other classes were scheduled as fully online classes. Lecture classes will now be online. Instructors of face-to-face and hybrid classes have the freedom to decide if their course design will include synchronous or asynchronous instruction methods or both. Therefore, it will be imperative to communicate to students the course expectations for required synchronous meetings as well as asynchronous assignments with due dates and set availability.

Here are some things to consider as you decide how to design your classes and some recommended best practices to help us navigate another semester fully online.

Questions to Consider

- Do students have a quiet space to complete course work?
- Do students have a computer with a strong internet connection, webcam, and microphone to thrive during live class meetings and office hours?
- Is it important for students to meet synchronously for some or all of the scheduled day/times?
- How can instructors ensure accessibility for all students and accommodations for students with special learning needs or disabilities?

Best Practices for Synchronous Instruction

- Inform students about any synchronous meeting day/times in the syllabus, during the first class meeting, and weekly in Announcement or module overview pages.
- Schedule synchronous meetings during the regularly scheduled class day/times to avoid conflicts with other courses that require synchronous meetings.
    - Consider using breakout rooms for small-group instruction and interactions.
- Consider using synchronous class time exclusively for discussions and one-on-one/small group conferences. Hold live office hours using video conferencing tools like ConferZoom, Cranium Café, or Microsoft Teams in Canvas as part of your regular and substantive contact.
- Post recorded live lectures with transcripts for students who were unable to attend live sessions due to work conflicts and family obligations.
    - Create follow-up assignments for students to earn their participation points if they are unable to attend synchronous meetings.
- Include the relevant asynchronous methods below.

Best Practices for Asynchronous Instruction

- Provide communication and interaction expectations in the syllabus, including contact info and your expected response time, as part of your regular and substantive contact.
- Post weekly announcements as part of your regular and substantive contact.
  - Consider providing an overview of the week and/or recap of the previous week.
  - Consider providing additional resources and whole-class feedback.
- Create modules for weekly/chapter-based course flow and assignments.
  - Consider providing module intro (objectives and To-Do list) and outro (wrap up and follow-on info) pages as part of your regular and substantive contact.
- Create content pages for each week/chapter, including a variety of content:
  - Text: textbook, articles, book chapters
  - Videos: recorded lectures, publisher's videos, documentaries, library videos, YouTube, PBS, and TED educational videos
  - Audio: music, podcasts, speeches
  - Images: art, photographs, charts, graphs, infographics
- Create regular, guided discussions as part of your regular and substantive contact.
  - Consider requiring higher order thinking skills such as content analysis and evaluation.
  - Consider requiring multiple submissions on multiple due dates to encourage conversations between students (rather than monologues).
  - Include detailed directions for discussion forum prompts.
    - Include expectations about the length and content of initial posts.
    - Include expectations about the number, length, and content of replies to classmates.
    - If possible, share a successful example of an initial post and a reply.
    - Intermediate/advanced interactions: Use tools like Canvas video, VoiceThread, Knowmia (TechSmith Relay) conversations, Fuse for Mobil Devices or FlipGrid to provide opportunities for audio and video interactions.
- Create additional opportunities for student-to-student interactions as part of the regular and substantive contact. Some possibilities include:
  - Peer-review assignments
  - Group assignments and projects
  - One-on-one conversations using video conferencing
- Create a variety of assessments offered on a regular schedule that include:
  - Low-stakes, formative assignments to practice course skills and SLOs
  - Medium and high-stakes, summative assessments tied to course SLOs
- Create rubrics as part of your regular and substantive contact for all graded work that provide clear criteria and ratings with descriptive feedback.

- Hold live office hours using video conferencing tools like ConferZoom, Cranium Café, or Microsoft Teams in Canvas part of your regular and substantive contact.