



**Student:** “I can’t seem to focus and I don’t understand what my professor wants.”

**Faculty:** “Where have some of my students gone? How do I balance rigor, learning assessments, and support students during this pandemic?”

The purpose of this Teaching Tip is to offer strategies to promote student success in your redesigned courses. It’s important to recognize that distant (remote) teaching and learning are not what most faculty and students signed up for at the beginning of this semester. During this time, Arend (2020) challenges faculty to thoughtfully reflect on their end-of-course objectives and suggests faculty adopt a ‘less is more’ approach. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do you want your students to possess at the end of your course? Doyle (2011) pushes the timeframe further asking what information do you want students to retain one year after your course.

In addition, faculty should consider how much content and student workload are realistic. Given the limited course migration time and online learning challenges, faculty might try teaching less content and instead provide students with additional opportunities for application and reflection (Arend, 2020). Students are more engaged with content when they use real life examples and make meaningful connections (Belenky, 2020). Are there some ways you could link your course content to the pandemic? My co-instructor and I offered extra points for a module specifically designed for nurses to increase mindfulness and resilience. Since COVID-19 is on everyone’s mind, why not make it part of your online discussions? Henry Hulett (2020) feels compassionate understanding is the most essential strategy for faculty to employ at this time. To help build a stronger learning community, ask your students to make connections between your content and the pandemic. The students might surprise you with some unique questions, discover relevant relationships, and propose creative alternative assignments to meet course objectives (Arend, 2020).

Gurung created a memo for his students on strategies for successful remote learning which included planning well and establishing new daily schedules (2020). First, students need to be aware of any course changes that may have occurred (schedules, methods of evaluation, assignments, due dates, etc.). Second, because many faculty have altered their courses, students will need to revise their electronic calendars or update manual planners. Faculty might consider emailing or posting friendly weekly reminders related to upcoming assignments and deadlines. In these announcements, address any potential questions or problems students may have (Henry Hulett, 2020). Third, Gurung (2020) recommends students continue to take notes while listening to remote lectures, completing reading assignments, and watching online videos similar to notes taken in a traditional class.

Given the abrupt change in course delivery and the pandemic, faculty should strive to maintain clear and frequent open communication with their students. Hui (2020) suggests that faculty reach out individually to students who seem to have a lot of questions using virtual meeting software. If the Internet signal is poor, a phone call may suffice. Discussion



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*From the desk of the Teaching and Learning Scholar*

boards can also be used to share answers for frequently asked questions. Watch for trends such as students not participating in online assignments or not showing up for 'live' lectures (Hui, 2020). During these trying times, faculty should contact any students ASAP who might be falling behind. It's also important to celebrate your students' success and offer as much praise as possible (Belenky, 2020). If you are using the gradebook in EduCat, you can enter brief messages next to each student's exam or assignment scores. I often will add notes such as, "Highest score in the class!" or "Great improvement on this exam!" For students, who do not perform well, a simple note stating, "Please schedule an appointment," conveys you care. If the student doesn't contact me, I follow-up with an email in a few days. Last summer, I convinced a student not to drop my online course after a phone conversation; she successfully completed the accelerated course three weeks later.

During a recent Faculty Learning Community meeting, our group brainstormed additional ways to facilitate student success in remote courses (J. Crabb, V. Jeevar, C. Keso, K. Newton, R. Nye, and J. Puncochar, personal communication, March 26, 2020). Our suggestions include the following:

- Ask students about how they are doing in general via an email, during a phone call, or before or after synchronous course meetings.
- Follow up individually with any students who are ghosting.
- Ask students what their individual barriers are to remote learning.
- Inquire about how the pandemic is impacting their lives.
- Survey students for their learning preferences and offer choices when possible.
- Record synchronous course meetings for students who experience connection problems or are not able to attend.
- Offer virtual exam review sessions and record the sessions.
- Discuss reasonable extensions and collaborate on alternative assignments.
- Encourage students to focus on their future: better chance for employment, higher earning potential, and increased career satisfaction.
- Send individual personalized emails to all your advisees.
- Provide numerous ways for students to contact you: email, cell phone, virtual office hours, and/or text messaging.

Finally, faculty who are new to remote teaching may want to take this opportunity to learn more about how online courses are designed and evaluated (Orlando, 2020). It's important to note teaching via distance delivery in response to an emergency and teaching online courses are not the same (Henry Hulett, 2020). You may wish to experiment with new educational technology and envision ways you could incorporate some of your remote assignments into a hybrid course or consider teaching an online course in the future. If you need any assistance, please contact the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) instructional designers, the Extended Learning and Community Engagement Scholar Dr. Stacy Boyer-Davis or myself. I can be reached via email [lflood@nmu.edu](mailto:lflood@nmu.edu) or cell phone (906) 250-3704.



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