



TEACHING TIP #15: Creating a student success map!

At this point in the semester, we have modified our courses to meet the pandemic safety requirements. However, despite wanting a return to face-to-face (F2F) courses, many students do not like the new normal and are not satisfied with the way their courses are being delivered. According to informal feedback from the NMU residence hall directors and the Counseling Center, some students especially freshmen and sophomores are confused with the different course delivery models, find it hard to pay attention while on Zoom, struggle to keep track of assignments, and are stressed-out in general due to the pandemic and national events. It's also important to note, the students are likely missing many other aspects of campus life which is contributing to some of this disharmony (Flaherty, 2020). I suspect many faculty feel the same. **The purpose of this Teaching Tip is to create a student success map for navigating courses during these challenging times.**

Most faculty are using some aspect of asynchronous course delivery this semester. Although asynchronous learning has the obvious benefit of increased flexibility, students need to recognize online learning requires self-motivation and discipline. Some strategies for success include helping students to: 1) maintain a consistent class schedule, 2) stay organized, 3) take notes, 4) study effectively, and 5) seek academic help early.

Maintain a consistent schedule: Because modified on-campus classes do not require students to physically attend every session, their weekly routines may fluctuate making it harder to create structured schedules. Some students may struggle to pay attention when attending a Zoom class, in their PJ's while lying in bed. Students might benefit from establishing a schedule of 'going to class' for their remote Zoom sessions. For example, students should set a clock to arise at a consistent time, get dressed, eat breakfast, and take a short walk around their apartment or house to simulate their 'walk to class' in order to create the headspace needed to pay attention (M. Boucher as cited in Aronson, 2020). Students might also consider keeping their same routine intact when they 'show up' to take remote scheduled exams.

Unless ill, encourage your students to attend your live classes either F2F or via Zoom. Although these class sessions are often recorded, students should resist the urge to skip class because they can watch it later. Faculty can involve their remote students by calling on each student by name verbally during synchronous sessions (Glazier, 2020). Remote students should plan to actively participate during class by asking questions, engaging in discussions, talking in virtual break-out rooms, completing polls, and using the simple thumbs up/applause icons. If you are teaching a hybrid course with limited F2F meetings, encourage students to use the designated class time to watch recorded lectures or complete online assignments to maintain a consistent daily schedule. Faculty can help by keeping regular due dates for homework assignments, quizzes, and discussion forums.

Stay organized: In a traditional class, students often receive verbal and visual reminders about assignments and approaching due dates. However, without these reminders, students especially freshmen, could lose track of important dates or fail to allow adequate time to complete assignments (Northeastern University, 2020). Faculty can help by sending friendly email reminders, posting course announcements, and using the calendar within EduCat. To keep students on track, Dr. Amy Barnsley posts videos every Monday outlining the week's learning activities, assignments, and due dates in her online math courses (personal communication, October 7, 2020). Some students may need encouragement to create weekly/monthly schedules and to use Google Calendar or paper planners to keep track of assignment due dates as well as to schedule consistent blocks for studying (Northeastern University, 2020). Students should also consider using technology alerts to help them stay organized.

Take notes: Encourage students to take notes during remote classes or when viewing online recorded lectures. Many student do not take notes during online lectures, or during other learning activities such as watching videos, visiting websites, or reading textbooks (Gonzalez, 2018; Gurung, 2020). However, the value of student-created notes is well documented resulting in better recall and exam performance (Gonzalez, 2018). If you have freshmen enrolled in your courses, you might consider teaching specific note-taking strategies such as the Cornell method or creating instructor guided notes where some material is intentionally left out for students to enter during class. Gonzalez offers some excellent examples for STEM faculty which include pre-made diagrams, technical illustrations, and equations (2018). In my guided notes, I include blank diagrams for concept maps, missing bullet points, and space to fill-in case study answers. I also cite textbook page numbers, add web links, and encourage students to search for digital images to enhance to their notes.

Manage study time effectively: Students may need to be reminded that the traditional 16 credit hour load requires 16 hours of in-class instruction whether or not they are physically on-campus and 30+ hours of study time (Aronson, 2020). Given the fact that in some courses, students might not be required to attend physically or virtually each class session, ensuring that students are spending adequate time on the task of learning is essential to their success (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Some students might benefit from using a structured study plan. Louisiana State University's Center for Academic Success (2016) describe a five step approach called *The Study Cycle* which has been adopted nationally by student support centers. These five steps include: 1) preview, 2) attend, 3) review, 4) study, and 5) check. Students are encouraged to preview before each class the course material by skimming chapter objectives, headings, boldface words, and summaries (Purdue University, n.d.). Students can also prepare by reviewing lecture notes or PowerPoint slides provided by faculty. Faculty can promote completion of these pre-class previews by using quizzes or online discussions. While attending a F2F class or remotely via Zoom, students should plan to take notes. Immediately after class or within the same day, they should take a few minutes to review their notes which promotes retention. Next, students are encouraged to complete 60-minute intense study sessions during which they set a goal, focus on interacting with the material, earn a reward, and review what they've just studied (Purdue University, n.d.). Finally, the students should check their overall learning through self-reflection, completing practice problems or study guides, and teaching their peers.

Seek academic help early: Students need to be encouraged and individually invited to seek help at the first sign of academic difficulty. How many times have you seen a student too late in the semester to produce a miracle on a final exam, paper, or project? Faculty should reach out early to students who

are struggling via a personal email to inquire how they are doing, to update them on their grades, or to remind them about an assignment deadline (Glazier, 2020). Faculty can also post individual notes within the EduCat grade book which I have found to be very effective.

As we navigate this new academic terrain, faculty and students will continue to be challenged to create effective teaching-learning environments. Unfortunately, these next few weeks are likely the 'calm before the storm' as we approach a chaotic national election which will provide additional challenges for faculty and students. I believe the faculty at NMU care deeply about student success and offer many forms of support. Please share your stories with me (llood@nmu.edu) related to how you are reaching out to students. Finally, let's support our colleagues as well during these tough times.

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