

Sparkshop Menu

The Center for Faculty Excellence can conduct 15-minute “sparkshops” at any of your departmental meetings or other gatherings of faculty and instructors. These short workshops are intended to spark ideas and conversation among faculty, and provide them with practical ideas for small changes they can implement in their teaching.

If there’s a topic you’d like us to address that is not listed, please reach out. We are happy to customize sessions (topic, length of time, format, etc.) to meet the needs of you and the faculty.

Topic	Suggested Time
Using AI to Enhance Productivity <i>(developed in collaboration with Digital Learning Solutions)</i> - Overview uses of AI related to teaching, research and professional tasks - Consider how AI can free up faculty time to allocate more to building relationships and engaging with students	Anytime during semester
AI Prompt Engineering - Explain what AI prompt engineering is and its significance in interacting with AI tools effectively - Discuss strategies for crafting effective prompts to achieve desired outcomes from AI tools	Anytime during semester
Think-Pair-Share - Introduce the basics of this simple active learning strategy to increase student engagement - Share variations and adaptations for those who already use this technique	Anytime during semester
Entrance/Exit Tickets - Consider how entrance/exit tickets can promote student accountability and provide formative feedback for students and the instructor - Share many entrance/exit ticket formats and prompts	Anytime during semester
Exam/Assignment Wrappers - Overview student attributions for success/failure and impact on motivation and future performance - Share examples of exam/assignment wrappers to help students reflect on and process the preparation and performance on a major class assessment	Early in semester; before first major exam/assignment

Topic	Suggested Time
Giving Wise Feedback - Overview the qualities of effective feedback and obstacles to students using feedback - Introduce a research-supported feedback structure that increases the likelihood students will engage with the feedback and benefit from it	Anytime during semester
Creating Transparent Assignments to Support Student Success - Overview the evidence-based TILT (Transparency in Learning & Teaching) framework which has been shown to help reduce achievement gaps - Share materials to support faculty in creating transparent assignments that clearly outline the purpose, tasks and criteria for success	Early in semester; before first major exam/assignment
Grading Practices for Student Success - Explain learner-centered grading principles - Discuss practical techniques for implementing learner-centered grading practices, such as providing clear and transparent grading criteria, offering varied assessment methods, and building in flexibility to address individual student circumstances	In preparation for new semester or anytime
Using Rubrics to Streamline Grading - Explain the key components of effective rubrics and share examples and tools to assist in building effective rubrics - Overview practical strategies for incorporating rubrics into grading/feedback workflows to enhance consistency, efficiency, and transparency in the assessment process	Early in semester or in preparation for new semester
The “Hidden Curriculum” - Define and identify examples of the hidden curriculum in higher education - Discuss ways to reveal the hidden curriculum to support student success	Anytime during semester
Building Welcoming Learning Experiences via Syllabus Language - Compare and contrast ‘warm’ versus ‘cold’ language use in syllabi and the student reaction to each - Share examples of warm language use in syllabi to foster a welcome learning environment	In preparation for new semester or anytime

Topic	Suggested Time
Roaring into a Successful Semester - Recognize and articulate potential concerns and apprehensions that students might have on the first day of class, fostering empathy and understanding. - Collaborate to generate and discuss strategies for addressing student concerns and creating a supportive learning environment from the first day of class.	In preparation for new semester
Nurturing Growth: Formative Assessments for Classroom Success - Explain what formative assessment is, how it differs from summative assessment, and how it can be used to support student learning and inform instructional practices - Share examples of quick formative assessments and discuss how/when they might be used	Anytime during semester
Help Students Stress Less and Learn More - Explain the brain's response to stress and how stress can impact learning. - Share instructional strategies to minimize stress and boost student motivation.	Early in semester or in preparation for new semester
Building a Sense of Belonging with Community Agreements - Explain what community agreements are and share suggestions for creating them in collaboration with students - Discuss how the process of creating community agreements can help to create a sense of belonging and accountability among students in a class	Early in semester or in preparation for new semester
AI Expectations Start with the Syllabus - Recognize the value of including an AI use statement in a course syllabus to promote clarity, transparency, and alignment with course goals. - Identify key elements of an effective AI syllabus statement, including boundaries for use, rationale, and connections to academic integrity and learning outcomes.	In preparation for new semester
First Impressions Matter: Designing a Homepage that Welcomes & Engages - Discover how your Brightspace course homepage can shape student perceptions before the first class. - Learn simple, high-impact ways to use homepage elements to create a welcoming and engaging course climate.	In preparation for new semester

Topic	Suggested Time
From Static to Dynamic: Boosting Engagement with Brightspace Creator+ Elements • Explore how interactive Creator+ elements can transform lecture materials from passive to active learning experiences. • Learn strategies to complement and enhance existing course content with interactive elements that invite student participation.	Anytime during semester
Practice with Purpose: Encouraging Learning Through Brightspace Creator+ Practice Activities • Discover how embedded practice activities can give students low-stakes opportunities to check their understanding and build confidence. • Learn ways to design practice interactions that provide immediate feedback and support ongoing learning without the pressure of grades.	Anytime during semester