THE *academy* FORUM

August 2021

The answers below were contributed by Academy members to questions posed in the April 2021 newsletter. Thank you to all our readers and contributors!

How can we recognize and account for the effort that is going into operationalizing the positive teaching and learning practices many instructors have adopted during our COVID impacted semesters?   Are there systematic ways to capture this effort, when it goes beyond the typical credit hour teaching load?

"We have to stop equating an hour of classroom teaching with an hour of work." -- *Amy, Fellow*

"Let's make a collective effort to quantify - and recognize! - the qualitative "best practices" of teaching excellence. Often, as inferred by this question, these are co-curricular .... mentoring, networking with and supporting Alumni, being accessible to our students (& willing to do the hard things.... taking time to meet, email, videoconference, & more), including Community Partners (class project leads, guest lecturers, mentors for our students, internship placements for our students)." -- *Michael Maguire, Fellow, School of Human Ecology*

Practicing Anti-Racism: What do you do in your current role to combat white supremacist culture?

"when talking about the history of science, I try to find examples of women and non-white scientists who have made contributions. additionally, I mention any hurdles they had to overcome to become scientists and to make the contributions to knowledge that they made. I think it is important to make students aware of how white european males held sway and made it difficult for others to succeed." -- *Amy, Fellow*

"Follow the lead of my students, particularly BIPOC students. Listen. Engage. Remain accessible .... as an ally, accomplice, mentor and friend. Drop my ego .... completely!" -- *Michael Maguire, Fellow, School of Human Ecology*

"I've been thinking a lot about the culture of internal hiring at UW-Madison and elsewhere, and how that impacts on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in very tangible and personal ways. I've seen this pattern repeatedly lately, and I wonder if the pandemic hiring freeze has exacerbated this practice. When a position isn't open to outside candidates, we are replicating our organizational status quo and not adding to the diversity of our campus workforce. And by inviting candidates to participate in a hiring exercise for which there is an

insider candidate, other candidates are put through a frustrating and potentially demeaning process: asking them to invest their time and energy into looking for a job that isn't really there. That negative impact is multiplied by racial, gendered and socio-economic factors in ways which I think it's fair to say are part of that white supremacist/white-privilege culture. What am I doing about it? Just pointing at the problem." -- *Dan, Fellow, Center for Teaching, Learning and Mentoring*

What is optimal for online course student enrollment size caps/maximums? What changes do you make when adapting to larger or smaller online groups?

"I find active learning works best with group sizes of 4-8 learners per facilitator. My enrollment is closer to 30 students, so we break into small groups whenever possible for active (verbal) participation. If we're all together for a session, I try to maintain some interaction by way of polling or open ended questions generating a list of ideas via the chat." -- *Kirstin Nackers, Affiliate, School of Medicine and Public Health*

"Thank you, Teaching Academy, for asking this searing question. "On the front lines," it can feel as if our institution needs to be more cognizant of optimal online class size! Maximum should not exceed 30 (allowing for small-group activities, assignments & interactions, making authentic assessment more manageable, giving students more opportunities to access one-on-one contact with instructors).
Adaptations for larger enrollments .... break down Discussions to groups (5-6 students per group), low-stakes assessments (much more manageable), built-in flexibility with student outputs for assessments (using social media, audio & video recording, etc). Smaller enrollments allow for exponentially more options :)". -- *Michael Maguire, Fellow, School of Human Ecology*

NEW QUESTIONS!

Answers to these questions will appear in the October 2021 newsletter.

- How do you assess and manage the workload for students (and instructors) in your courses?
- What tools or approaches can we use to assess the "co-curricular" best practices of teaching excellence - e.g., mentoring, community partner inclusion, alumni contact & networking?
- *(Carried over April 2021)* What is your take on virtual conferences and events? Share any positive (or negative, or funny) experiences.

Make your contribution here: https://go.wisc.edu/theacademyforum

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