Strategies Toolbox for Large Enrollment

Ways to make large classes more manageable while maintaining essential characteristics of a quality learning environment

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CHALLENGES	STRATEGIES
Email Volume	• Set up a Help Forum in Discussion Board for students to post questions • Link students to a FAQ Google Doc for the course • Add a FAQ section for specific assignments that tend to get more questions • Establish an email Subject Line requirement • Create a filter for each semester (or class) for your email address using the "+" sign so that all emails from students go to a designated folder instead of inbox (e.g. jjdoe+Fall20@alaska.edu) • Utilize a teaching assistant (undergraduates for credit or pay, graduate TAs) - be sure they complete FERPA certification • Create and post "How to" videos or screencasts • Document questions in one place so that you have a reference for making changes the next semester • Use a "Standard Response" tool that you can copy and paste repeated answers (e.g., TypeIt4Me (Mac), Ditto (PC), a document residing on your desktop that contains standard answers) • Use the Stack Method of Zeroing InBox to manage email efficiently and productively https://www.stackmethod.com/#video-lessons • For Canvas adopters (an alternative to Blackboard), use the "inbox" feature and Teacher App to keep all course communication in one place - it is similar to a text message that can either be answered immediately or checked at the end of the day • For Canvas adopters, use the tool that allows you to email everyone who has not submitted a specific assignment to only give that group a gentle reminder • Set up a Google Voice phone number for free that you can give to students so they can call and text you without knowing your actual personal cell number

	● Other strategies?
Synchronous Session - Lecture	● Use an accessible forum (e.g., Zoom, Shindig, Google Meet) ● Assign an advanced student or TA to monitor Q&A and/or chat box ● Use the Polls function in Zoom to track attendance, perform concept checks, or use as a graded mini-quiz (a report is available afterwards in your Zoom account indicating who participated in each poll) ● Randomly call on students to respond ● Use the Whiteboard tool ● Record and post sessions so that other students have access to missed material ● Other strategies?
Synchronous Session - Discussions	● Create Zoom breakout rooms for smaller group discussions - have them report back to whole class ○ If there is limited time to report back, each group can populate a shared document ● Use the Polls function in Zoom to encourage and track engagement (a report is available afterwards in your Zoom account indicating who participated in each poll) ● Use a collaborative brainstorming tool to encourage engagement (e.g., Google Doc, IdeaBoardz, Realtime Board, Whiteboard, Jamboard) ● Other strategies?
Synchronous Session - Group work	● Create Zoom breakout rooms - provide clear, identifiable goals ○ If there is limited time to report back, each group can populate a shared document ● Other strategies?
Structuring Asynchronous Content	*These strategies help reduce the volume of questions from students and help students plan so that more of them stay on track.* ● Keep the structure of the week (or unit) roughly the same for each one so that students know what to expect and can settle into a rhythm ● Add emojis or image icons to signify the type of assignment or what they can expect (a video, reading, interaction, reflection, etc)

	• Provide estimations for how long each activity or task might take
	• Use Adaptive Release (Blackboard or Canvas)
	  ○ It tailors availability of content based on performance of earlier activities or scores
	  ○ It allows for scaffolding, completion of tasks before moving on, adaptive learning, mastery, etc. (e.g., you can require certain activities such as watching a lecture be completed before they can move on to other assignments)
	• Add an opportunity for reflection and/or feedback at the end of each week so you can monitor learning (e.g., still-unclear concepts, accuracy of timing estimates, tech issues) - it can be an objective assessment, 200-word quick write, etc
	• Other strategies?

Discussions (asynchronous)	• Break students into small groups first using Blackboard or Canvas, then have them discuss topic within small group • Encourage a culture of distribution of responses across the class (e.g., “Respond to those with no replies first”) • Allow a single discussion to continue across 2-3 weeks to capture momentum, bring in new applications, and reduce number of original reflections to be graded • Require that students reply to at least 2 posts - quality can be enhanced by encouraging a question in the original post that responders can direct comments toward, or by providing specific criteria in response (e.g., “must apply 2 concepts from chapter in reply to others’ reflections”) • Monitor discussion, but instead of replying to all students, summarize highlights and opportunities for improvement in an announcement • Make deliberate choices in design to have some discussions be graded for content and higher order thought, where others are for credit/no credit • Consider incorporating other forms of interaction and reflection besides discussion boards that are easier to manage at scale (e.g., group collaborative document, collaborative slide show) • Use a third-party free discussion tool like Slack to reduce “clunkiness” of discussion boards - it can create dynamic opportunities since students and instructors can quickly use the “reply” option on their mobile devices. Instructors can designate appropriate emoticons to indicate the point-level of a post - this will also tag the post so that any other replies will show up in the instructor's **Threads** sidebar, ensuring all posts are easily findable and no responses

	from other students fall through the cracks ● Use the free FlipGrid tool for video discussions - it is well-liked by most students, enhances interactions, can be used easily with phones, allows students a chance to express ideas away from typing, provides a comfort zone with social media feel, and integrates with Canvas (does not integrate with Blackboard) - many creative alternatives can be given to students with concerns of having a video social presence. ● Consider piloting the Packback tool. It is promoted heavily, but none of us have used it. It is not free - perhaps eCampus would consider covering the cost one semester to pilot its value? ● Other strategies?
Student Participation (asynchronous)	● Incorporate periodic automatic objective assessments for self-check in, honor system verification of task completion, quick concept checks, mini-quizzes, etc. ○ Use tools such as Blackboard “test”, PlayPosit videos (syncs with Bb or Canvas) ● Other strategies?
Expert-level Feedback	● Use rubrics (formal ones embedded in Blackboard or informal ones that you create in a document for copy/paste of standard responses) - regardless, consider sharing them with students for clarity of expectations and how performance impacts grade ● For Canvas adopters, use the embedded Speed Grader which includes rubrics, notating on submissions, comments box, and ability to easily record audio and video feedback ● Use a “Standard Response” tool that you can copy and paste repeated quality feedback (e.g., TypeIt4Me [Mac], Ditto, document of standard responses) ● Provide audio feedback using free tools instead of typing feedback (e.g., Mote, Vocaroo, Churbit) - these can be inserted as a link or embedded in feedback boxes ● Use tools designed to decrease the time spent grading (e.g., Gradescope, PlayPosit, Blackboard “tests”) - these can be used for objective or subjective assessments for surface-level or deeper-level learning objectives ● Secure a grading assistant (graduate TA with tuition waiver, graduate or undergraduate student grader for pay or for credit) to help with monitoring/guiding discussions, answering common questions, grading reflections or assessments that you have calibrated together ● Assign group collaborative documents - you are then only looking at one document with multiple entries (students put initials next to their contribution) - feedback goes to whole

	group/class within the margin of document (audio or typed) ● Assign group projects, reducing the number of big projects to grade; multiple students receive same grade (this strategy is outweighed sometimes with front-end work needed to support HOW to work in groups) ● Other strategies?
Instructor Presence (asynchronous)	● Have each class fully prepped and loaded before semester starts so that weekly time can be spent engaging with discussions, providing feedback on assignments, mentoring TAs, and engaging in personalized outreach to students needing more attention ● Start each week with a short instructor video that can answer any questions that have come up the previous week and give an outline of what the tasks are for the week and what kind of challenges learners can expect ● Use free audio tools for announcements, feedback, or assignment descriptions (e.g., Vocaroo, Churbit) ● Other strategies?
Group Projects (synchronous or asynchronous)	● Limit group sizes to a minimum of 5 or a maximum of 10 ● Minimize the group part of the grade if individual contributions are easy to assess (with their initials) ○ Grade consists of “your individual part plus a low-stakes groupiness part” ● For Canvas adopters, use tool that can break students into small groups automatically. ● Use free Slack tool which allows for creating Private channels where students can plan and organize group projects for presentation to the rest of the class ● Avoid assessing individual group contributions (unless it is part of learning outcomes!) - just grade the final product of the group as long as you are willing to give a grade to a student who does not pitch in ● Other strategies?
Tech Support For Instructors	● Use the UAF eCampus Open Labs which are By Appointment only now ● Call the UAF Office of Information Technology (rather than email them): 907-474-8300 ● Seek online tutorials ● Keep a log of past problems with solutions

	● Develop strong relationships with representatives of learning materials used in the class ● Keep a log of customer support hours and procedures for all digital tools, including UAF-sponsored (e.g., Blackboard) ● Other strategies?
Tech Support For Students	● Maintain and share a Google Doc for each of the main tech issues that been a challenge in the past (e.g., how to access the class, what to do if you forget a password, video troubleshooting). This document can be linked from anywhere in the course and repeated times. ● Use a scaffolding technique for students, especially in lower-level courses - provide smaller low-stakes tasks that build on each other to allow mastery of the tech skill needed ○ For example, if they need to upload a photo, require them watch a video that explains why this is necessary for the class, how to do it, why this is beneficial for them outside of the course, and what kind of problems they might run into. Then provide a low stakes assignment where they practice uploading a photo. Provide a link in this and in subsequent assignments to a troubleshooting document that addresses common problems so that they have somewhere to go to solve the problem on their own. If questions persist, learners can be directed to the document, OR update the troubleshooting document with new challenges. ● Link students to a Google Doc with frequently asked tech questions ● Other strategies?