

# Faculty Conversations About Teaching

*In our April 2018 faculty conversation, we will discuss how to plan, create, or revise courses, assignments, materials and teaching.*

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## **My Opening Idea or Definitions**

*Provide a 50-150 word opening statement with your understanding of the most interesting or important aspects of this topic (to you and your teaching).*

When I first began teaching I was much more focused on content learning. As I have aged I recognize that much of what we remember has some sort of relevance or usefulness (application) to our lives. As a result, I have moved toward process in teaching, by incorporating skills like mindfulness as well as others that increase self-awareness and application to real world situations. This transition in my teaching took a significant turn when I did a service learning project years ago in a psychology class. Students reflected on ways they learned through their projects outside the classroom. This convinced me that teaching for transfer, and bringing ideas to real world situations was important to me.

## **What Have I Tried?**

*Summarize 3-4 approaches, emphases, scenarios, or assignments, each briefly explained (50-100 words each) so that participants can envision your past and/or current teaching experiences, whether successful or still evolving.*

- I have tried to create experiential exercises to help illustrate concepts from the theories and interventions in sport psychology. For example, when we try to teach present moment awareness and attention, I have incorporated mindfulness exercises to teach students how to use this skill to calm the body and prepare the body for competition or performance stress.
- I use reflection journals as part of the participation requirement for the course to have a private place to describe reactions (positive or negative) to the mindfulness exercises or other experiential tasks we do in class.
- A final project for the course is an applied project in which the student acts as a sport psychologist and works on a performance or behavioral goal using two psychological skills for the assortment of skills/intervention strategies we learn about in the course. They apply this over the course of 6 to 8 weeks and do a final presentation to the class on the outcomes of their project.

## What Am I Exploring? What Am I Interested In?

*Provide a list of 3-4 questions, activities, or options that you have been considering as you continue to adapt your teaching approaches.*

- I am interested in how to foster critical thinking in a creative way. In doing the course re-design for online teaching it made me consider where in my current teaching this takes place. I recognize that I will have to build more activities and assessments in order to meet the goal of teaching critical evaluation of research; I realized in the redesign process that they only attain a basic level of critical evaluation of research. However, I did recognize that they learn more about case study because they use this method.
- I am also trying to teach undergrads to take more responsibility for their learning, but I often fall back into the traditional teacher role that believes I need to explain/present/make it interesting to them. What is challenging is I have to change my own expectations about what I am supposed to be doing as the professor, and let them do more preparation in order to engage in a less passive way.
- Last, I have thought more about assessment and engaging the students in ways that help them assess each other's work as another source of feedback. Testing in particular is a challenge in that I have never enjoyed evaluating students in this way. It is necessary for them to review material, but my applied orientation makes this less significant to me than their final projects.

## What are some Best Practices, Tips, or Resources I'd Like to Share with Other Faculty?

*If you could recommend a list of 3 core values, teaching tips, and/or resources (articles, books, and links) that faculty across disciplines could find helpful to implement Mason Impact, what would your list include?*

- This is going to sound silly, but my goal is to be myself as an online instructor. That is, to be able to keep my values (e.g. experiential learning, applied focus) as I work to create experiences that are available online.
- I enjoyed the article by Ambrose on "How do Students Develop Mastery?" as well as the article on Bloom's taxonomy. Ambrose's concepts of component learning and especially expert blind spots helped me recognize that I sometimes expect students to know how to approach a task without giving them a model, or teaching them in steps.
- I think doing a concept map and clarifying my objectives for this course was a unique experience that helped me to articulate my values as a teacher and also what my objectives for the class were. I have been teaching this class for a while, but putting it under the magnifying glass led me to think about it in new ways and to chunk the information differently.



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