

Faculty Conversations About Teaching

Mason Impact: Creating Engaged Citizens and Well-Rounded Scholars Prepared to Act



Jesse Guessford, PhD, Associate Director of Undergraduate Education & Associate Professor of Music, Director of Music Technology, School of Music, College for Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA)

Dr. Jesse Guessford is Mason's new Associate Director of Undergraduate Education.

He also is Associate Professor of Music and Director of Music Technology in CVPA. He regularly teaches introductory and upper-level undergraduate courses in Music Technology; he teaches in f2f format.

In Spring 2018, Jesse is teaching MUSI 359, Instrument Building.

His research interests include the scholarship of teaching with and about technology; and the music of John Cage.

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What I've Tried

- Involving the co-curricular in program design.
- Involving colleagues. The curriculum can be daunting and don't forget about staff.
- Letting students explore a course or a curriculum with options.
- Listening to student feedback.

What I'm Exploring

- Designing curriculum and working with others.
- Working multidisciplinarily.
- Finding resources.
- How do I get students to attend class when I have a guest?

Best Practices & Tips

- Scaffolding.
- Clear course objectives.
- Do not try to do too much.

Faculty Conversations About Teaching: Mason Impact

Laurence Bray, PhD, Assistant Professor & Associate Chair, Department of Bioengineering, Volgenau School of Engineering (VSE)



Dr. Laurence Bray is Assistant Professor & Associate Chair, Bioengineering (VSE). She supervises the undergraduate & master's bioengineering programs.

Laurence studies computational neuroscience; her research includes developing robotic functions that mimic the way humans think.

She teaches project-based courses for the biomedical engineering program.

In Spring 2018, she is teaching BENG 313, Physiology for Engineers; BENG 493, Advanced Senior Design; and BENG 499, Biotechnology Commercialization.

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What I've Tried

- Exposition to realistic problems and challenges.
- Multidisciplinary teams of students from different backgrounds.
- In-class, hands-on activities.

What I'm Exploring

- Assigning team members based on knowledge, skills and personality traits.
- Friendly competition between students or team of students
- Team-building activities.

Best Practices & Tips

- Do not be afraid to try new things and be out of your comfort zone.
- Get continuous feedback from the students.
- Be willing to learn, adapt and make adjustments along the way.

What is Mason IMPACT?

"Students participating in MPACT experiences will engage with Mason's signature programs in undergraduate research and creative activities, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement, through MPACT designated courses and co-curricular activities, global experiences, and internships. Mason MPACT: Transformative learning that cultivates students to become citizens and scholars prepared to act."

-Dr. Jesse Guessford

Mason IMPACT is...

- A unique experience for all undergraduate students
- Inquiry- and project-based, challenge-driven activities
- Transformative classroom learning
- Real-world opportunities
- Ready to enter the workforce and make a difference"

-Dr. Laurence Bray

"Mason Impact is an opportunity for students to engage in significant learning experiences...which change the way students live their personal, social, civic, or professional lives. These experiences extend beyond a single course. The key component to significant learning experiences is that they require both a process and an outcome. Students need to be engaged in their learning and their participation in the course has to have high potential for being of value, resulting in lasting, significant change."

-Dr. Laura Wheeler Poms

Faculty Conversations About Teaching: Mason Impact

Laura Wheeler Poms, PhD, Assistant Professor in Global and Community Health & Undergraduate Program Coordinator, College of Health & Human Services (CHHS)



Dr. Laura Wheeler Poms is Assistant Professor, Global and Community Health. She has taught at Mason for 17 years-- as graduate TA, adjunct & now full-time faculty.

She also is faculty fellow in the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities and Research (OSCAR), which promotes undergraduate research across Mason.

In 2016 Laura received College of Health and Human Services Master Teacher Award.

In Spring 2018, she is teaching GCH 412 Fundamentals of Epidemiology & GCH 376 Health Ethics, Leadership and Advocacy.
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What I've Tried

- To develop undergraduate research skills, we've used a scaffolded approach.
- To practice "real world" leadership & teamwork skills, students engage in various activities in which they learn & reflect about themselves in a professional context of organizations.
- To create engaged citizens and well-rounded scholars who are prepared to act, students complete an advocacy project in which they analyze health-related legislation and how they may influence public health policy.
- We are trying an interdisciplinary approach to teaching global health (GCH 205), with engineering and public health students working together.

What I'm Exploring

- How to infuse more civic engagement into our BS in Community Health curriculum?
- How to better manage the grading load for these courses, particularly the reflections?
- How to make the connections to the "real world" more intentional and explicit? How to balance the process with the outcome?
- How do I assess whether these really are significant learning experiences? What outcomes are achieved and are they important?

Best Practices & Tips

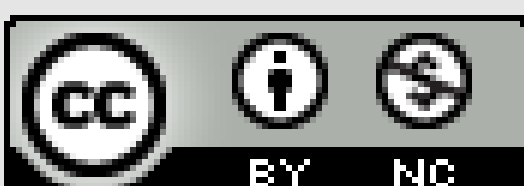
- Leave time to discuss the process as well as the expected outcome. Remember to leave room in the course schedule to focus what it means to work in a team or to manage a project.
- Expect that it might not work the first time you try a project or in-class activity, but that can also be a learning experience.
- Think about what activities or approaches you are currently taking. Can they be translated into something where students are responsible for some of the learning?
- Do not forget to figure out how to evaluate that you are doing. This will make promotion time a little easier.

TRY IT!

How might you apply these ideas, tips & best practices to a course you are currently teaching?

What additional information or resources might you need in order to try it?

For info and guidance, please contact the Stearns Center for Teaching & Learning (4th Floor, Innovation Hall)



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Recommended Resources

Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2016). *Learning assessment techniques: a handbook for college faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bart, M. (2012). Reap the Benefits of Experiential Learning Without Leaving the Classroom. Faculty Focus, Magna Publications, retrieved from: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/instructional-design/reap-the-benefits-of-experiential-learning-without-leaving-the-classroom/>

Educational Advisory Board (EAB) (2015). Preparing Students for the Workforce: Six co-curricular opportunities for experiential learning. Downloadable Infographic at <https://www.eab.com/research-and-insights/student-affairs-forum/infographics/preparing-students-for-the-workforce>

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: an integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.
also available at:
[https://www.unl.edu/philosophy/%5BL._Dee_Fink%5D_Creating_Significant_Learning_Experi\(BookZ.org\).pdf](https://www.unl.edu/philosophy/%5BL._Dee_Fink%5D_Creating_Significant_Learning_Experi(BookZ.org).pdf)

LaPrad, J. and Mink, A. (2009). The ECHO Model of Experiential Learning. Faculty Focus, Magna Publications, retrieved from: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/the-echo-model-of-experiential-learning/>

Mason Impact- Office of the Provost & Vice President (George Mason University):
<https://provost.gmu.edu/initiatives/mason-impact>

Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning (George Mason University): Experiential Learning.
<http://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/teaching/experiential-learning>

