In our faculty conversation, we will address strategies for small changes in your teaching which can result in big learning for your students.

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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).

While course overhauls are necessary, at times, as a way to modernize, become more congruent with student needs, and/or address shifts in social or community climates, small, incremental changes in course framing and teaching can also make an enormous difference.

Targeted, meaningful course and teaching revisions/changes – regardless of scope – can help a course blossom. Intentional changes grow out of observation, consistent student feedback, instructor self-reflection, peer review of teaching, mistakes and productive failures, and even a "sense" that something is not quite working. Little clues can make for BIG improvements!

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.

- As a way to encourage consistent student feedback, which can lead to small changes for better teaching, I collect anonymous student surveys every 3 weeks. I review the feedback carefully and, often, implement quick changes that serve students' needs. Once I make those changes, I let students how their feedback led specifically to course improvement.
- Select survey questions:
    - Was anything covered in this week's class (or previous weeks) still unclear? Explain.
    - What can Dr. McCarron do to improve the course, in general, at this time?
    - What has been a challenge for you in this course, thus far? Your favorite part?
    - Is there anything you can do to make the course more meaningful for yourself? Explain.

- For me, keeping an instructor journal can be a valuable tool in noticing areas for course improvement. I journal informally (a small notebook carried in my bag or on a device) and both jot down quick notes as I notice opportunities for change as well as sit down for a few concerted minutes at the close of each week to reflect and brainstorm course improvements. Notes might include reminders to clarify a syllabus item, or a decision to revise an assignment.

- At the start of every term in Week 1, I require students to complete a Syllabus & Blackboard Tour Q&A (in the form of open-ended "quiz"). This assessment includes a number of questions aimed at encouraging students to read the syllabus and explore the course layout on the web (for both face-to-face and online). Students learn about deadlines, writing requirements, resource locations, late submission deductions, learning outcomes, etc. I evaluate these "quizzes" by the start of Week 2 and, immediately, have clues about how clearly/unclearly I communicated requirements, students' assumptions about course content, awkwardness in course layout, etc. Based on these clues, I make quick adjustments to improve course flow, deadlines, etc.

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.

• For online courses, specifically, I am exploring shifting to multiple individual conferences with all students (through Skype, Blackboard, and/or phone) as a way touch base on individual students' sense of the class as well as review proximal assignments. Online courses, at times, can disconnect the feedback loop crucial to providing opportunities for teaching improvement.

• Currently, I am exploring/working with my undergraduate TAs on lesson plan critiques. Each TA, with fresh eyes can review a lesson plan/module of their choosing and identify 3-4 challenges. This activity is not only designed to help foster learning for the TA and honor them as partners in the teaching process, but it is also designed to generate expedient feedback for my teaching.

• I am exploring the use of Blackboard's new "Feedback Box" tool (http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/Faculty/index.cfm?audiencename=Faculty&categoryname=Bb%20Course%20Management&datname=Feedback%20Box) created to enable students to offer immediate in-assignment feedback to me (I also receive an email alert when feedback is posted).

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?

• Nilson, L. B., (2016). Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

• Working with a departmental colleague on a peer assessment/review of your course – whether they sit in on a single session, scroll through your online layout, or take a look at your syllabus and assignments – the feedback emerging from "fresh eyes" is invaluable.

- Asking for structured student feedback consistently (anonymous surveys once/month via Google Forms, Blackboard survey function, or hard copy) lead to quick improvements in teaching.

- Subscribe to the About Teaching in Higher Ed podcast and/or newsletter – loads of quick tips! https://teachinginhighered.com/about/