Managing Your Time

Good teaching takes time, and good teaching –from a distance and during COVID-19 emergency -- may take even more time. Now that you've been teaching remotely for a few weeks, it may be helpful to pause a moment, take a breath, and reflect on how you've been using your time. We know that you have other professional and personal responsibilities demanding your time, in addition to teaching. How to balance everything you need to do right now, and still support student learning in your Mason courses? Here we provide you with some time management strategies, and tips for helping your students manage their time.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME (as an Instructor)?

Here are a few tips for managing your time efficiently when teaching remotely/online.

Establish and maintain a consistent schedule. As much as possible, set a regular schedule for working on your remote course. Let your students know when you are available for consultation or questions; hold regular office hours in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra or WebEx. Block out time in your schedule to prepare course presentations & materials, to grade assignments, and to prepare feedback.

Use technology to support workflow. Blackboard has tools to keep you and your students on-track, such as Email & Messaging, Announcements, Calendar, Performance Dashboard, Retention Center. You also can create Rubrics in Blackboard to deliver efficient, consistent feedback.

Regularly take stock and make changes to how you use your time (both in and out of the classroom). Every few class sessions, review your use of time. What seemed the most productive and least productive use of time? Readjust your plans accordingly. Also consider how you use your time out-of-the classroom (*e.g.,* preparing for class, grading, preparing feedback). What are the priority tasks right now which need your action?

Realize that you don't need to have all of the answers! You can refer students to Mason Courses Support to answer their technology questions, you can refer them to the Keep Learning page and University Life resources, and you can consult the Stearns Center Instructional Continuity page for teaching resources.

Take time to take care of yourself. It's a stressful time right now, so remember to take care of **yourself**. If possible, schedule time each week to rest & relax. Reach out to your faculty colleagues to share ideas, problem-solve, re-charge & support each other. See Mason's Center for Well-Being website, Well-Being Resources to Use During the Coronavirus Pandemic, for well-being tips & resources.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR STUDENTS MANAGE TIME DURING THE EMERGENCY?

Your students also have had to pivot from face-to-face courses to remote learning. How can you help them with time management, being compassionate & flexible, yet retaining academic rigor in your course? Here are few tips.

Prioritize weekly tasks for your students. Provide a list of priority tasks for your students for each week. Students then can decide which tasks to handle first, if they have limited time. Post the task list in your regular Announcements in the Blackboard course, emailing the Announcements to the entire class.

Reach out to students who appear to be struggling. To check the progress of students in your course, use Blackboard Evaluation Tools (Performance Dashboard and Retention Center) under Course Management in your Blackboard course menu. The Performance Dashboard shows user activity in your course; the Retention Center helps you see which students in your course are at risk. You can use this information to reach out and communicate with students who are not keeping up, to find out how you may help them.

Offer assignment options. If you had included complicated projects (such as group work) in your course, such projects might be difficult for all students to manage remotely. You might consider alternative options for some projects, such as substituting individual assignments for group work.

Rework/re-envision assignments. Consider canceling or shortening assignments to focus student attention on just the main learning goals for each week. Focus on **essential** content for the course, *i.e.,* content which students need to know and master, particularly if the course is a prerequisite for another course in the program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Learning Services (University Life): Keep Learning: How to Be a Successful Online Learner.

- Stearns Center: Keep Teaching! Maintaining Instructional Continuity in Emergency or Interrupted Operations.

- Stearns Center: Time Management.

Luanne Norden, Instructor (RHT, CEHD) and The Stearns Center for Teaching & Learning contributed to This Week's Survival Tips.

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