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Organization your Online Courses

Organizing your Online Course with experts [April Mondy](#), Alyson Snowe, and [Michael Wesch](#). Moderated by [Kevin Kelly](#) regional academic director at ACUE.

[00:00:05] Welcome, everyone. Our webinar will begin shortly.

Rebecca Martin [00:01:02] Hello and welcome to the second webinar in our effective online instruction series, Managing Your Online Presence. Thank you all so much for joining today. The turnout is really incredible. My name is Rebecca Martin and I am the executive director of the National Association of System Heads. First, I'd like to thank all of you for what you are doing today and tomorrow and next week for your students during this very uncertain time for all of us. We know that you've really stepped up to the challenge and are making learning happen in your online classrooms, in your remote environments. I'd also like to commend everyone across higher education for making an astonishing transition to online learning. In just a matter of days. But we know that moving at course online like being assigned to a classroom is just the start. The Web in this webinar series emerged to support the next phase work to ensure that faculty received the support they they need to ensure that every student has a quality online experience. Our goal is to have practical conversations with experts on how to teach well online. Let me now turn the session over to Kevin Kelly from ACUE, who will serve as today's moderator.

Kevin Kelly [00:02:25] Thank you, Rebecca. We appreciate everything that Nash does and is doing right now to support faculty, including support for this webinar series. We're excited to be joined today by some amazing experts, truly leaders in the field. But before I introduce them, I'd like to review our agenda. We'll start with a brief conversation among our presenters to set some context for today's topic. Organizing your online course will reserve most of today's session about thirty five minutes for discussion and a Q&A with you. Our goal is to have an interactive conversation focused on this topic with practical ideas and suggestions for your online teaching. Please pose your questions using the Q&A function, which you'll find at the bottom of your Zoom window. We'll moderate and discuss your questions with our experts. Toward the end of the hour, we'll share how we can continue the conversation at our online discussion board and share some additional

resources to support your teaching. The topics for this webinar series were inspired by the free resources recently published by ACUE and our online teaching tool kit. We heard from many of you a desire to engage in conversation with experts and each other about these six topics. Which we will do today and the upcoming sessions and on the webinar discussion board. Leading our conversation today are Alyson Snowe, assistant professor at the Community College of Rhode Island. Michael Wesch, associate professor at Kansas State University. And April Mondy, instructor and management at Delta State University. And I'm Kevin Kelly. I'm honored to be moderating this conversation dedicated to organizing your online course. Before joining ACUE, I led online teaching and learning and faculty development teams at San Francisco State University, where I still teach online courses every semester. So like all of you, I'm looking forward to learning with and from our experts. So let's get started. Welcome, panelists. Alyson, thank you for agreeing to start the conversation.

Alyson Snowe [00:04:46] Hi, good afternoon. I would like to first thank everyone for taking the time to join us. I'm very excited to be participating in a ACUE's webinar series. As many of you know, there are endless resources available to us to help us design effective online classes. However, because over the past month, many of us have had to transition our online. Our part in our traditional courses online with little or no training. My advice is to keep it simple. While I'm talking, please take a look at the screen and think about the juxtaposition of the two environments that are being shown. I read an article last week about student success that really resonated with me. It said that when you walk into a classroom, you embody everything about a course for your students. You welcome them. You explain the structure, you describe the relevance of content and answer questions about expectations. However, when you move to an online teaching environment, that communication is mediated by technology. In other words, what passes naturally and directly from you to your students in a classroom now passes from you to the computer and from the computer to your students. Because of this, one of our biggest challenges is curating the online learning space in such a way that students feel confident that they're going to be able to access all the resources needed to successfully complete their assignments. The slide I'm sharing, although greatly exaggerated, juxtaposes a student's possible perception of a disorganized course versus a well organized course in the first picture, or if the first picture were a description of perhaps the way my class was organized and I asked you to locate a document, how might you feel? You might initially feel overwhelmed and anxious. And then after searching through all my piles of paperwork, you might begin to feel frustrated by your inability to locate what you were tasked with finding. Often we have the ability to locate things despite clutter and chaos if we're the ones who created the environment in the first place. However, expecting anyone else to navigate our space would be unrealistic. The same holds true for the online learning space that you're curating. So two things that you should consider when organizing the course are the breakdown and sequencing of the content and the deliberate organization of activities. And that includes skills development and assessment. Students should know what the learning objectives are, what they need to do to demonstrate to you that they've met the learning objectives and when and where they're supposed to do it. Could you switch to the next screen, please? Modules serve as the building blocks of an online course. They can be organized by time. You could organize them daily, weekly or biweekly, or you could choose to organize them by content such as chapters in the textbook module should include links to all the materials, discussions, quizzes and assignments that are covered in a particular learning unit. One thing I've learned is to minimize clicking and scrolling the clicks and different page links should be kept to a minimum. I teach at a college that uses Blackboard. So if you look at the left hand side of the screen, you'll see that I have a menu to assist students in navigating the course. I

organized my course using weekly modules to access. The module students need to click on weekly sessions, the right hand side of the screen shows the students view of the modules content. You'll notice I begin by outlining the learning objectives of the week and then I follow this every week with a to do list. And then below that are links to individual assignments and resources. Students will need to access to complete the assignments successfully as well as rubrics for grading the assignments. Each one of my modules looks exactly the same. Consistency is very important. Recovery from confusion in an online environment is exponentially more challenging. Than in a traditional course. So by providing structure and clear, welcoming instructions and information is all very critical to eliminating any of pastie for the students.

[00:09:24] You, Alyson, April and Mike. Would you like to build on Allison's ideas?

[00:09:29] I would actually. Alyson, I think your initial image was very effective and I saw the picture of that disorganized office. I immediately started to feel anxiety and I got overwhelmed, which I think is exactly how students feel when they enter our class and they get overwhelmed because everything is disorganized and all over the place. And it's probably true that when students get frustrated with the online environment, that has an impact on their level of engagement, it has an impact on their commitment as well as their participation. If they are constantly getting frustrated with the class, they may be prone to simply disengaged altogether. So it does have an impact on their success. If we're unable to organize the class effectively.

[00:10:20] I agree and and you just really have to keep keep everything very, very clean without any, you know, extraneous links that really don't go anywhere where they can get confused. Ideally, you given create a situation where they know exactly where to find whatever it is they need. And maybe there is even just that one place for it. So they don't get too confused about, you know, if you have a chat and a discussion and a collaborate page and all these different things, it can ultimately become confusing when you announce like, hey, let's go have a chat. I mean, what did you mean a discussion or chat? And they're trying to find the right chat. That can be very confusing. So I like to clean up the menu as much as possible and keep everything very, very clean. So, yeah, I like what you've done here.

[00:11:07] I can only concur with the other panelists, and Alyson, there's one thing that I do in addition to what you do on that opening screen with learning outcomes and the to do list following the lead from the T. Transparency and Learning and Teaching Initiative out of University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I include rationale. Why are we going through this particular module? And often that's really helpful for first generation students and others who need to see that connection. So I have that what in the how like you have, but also the why.

[00:11:43] I understand one thing. I also in a to do list include at a time estimate that I think the students might spend on that and that helps them organize their time a little bit.

[00:11:55] It looks like you have some of that in there. So that's.

[00:12:00] Fantastic. Well, thanks, everybody. April, these ideas lead into your topic nicely, so why don't you take it away?

[00:12:07] They do. I'm going to also reinforce Alyson's use of module's. I believe they're are very effective and efficient way to centralize content and keep the students all in one

place. But the question still remains of how do I organize that for my specific class? And the answer is that depends. Every class is structured and formatted differently. And that's the case even in our face to face classes. And well, what works in one class may not work in another. So there's not a one size fits all approach. But there are some fundamental principles that can be applied across the board. When we're designing our online course, it should be done with a sense of direction. Where do I want my students to go? How do I want them to get there and what do I want them to do? Along the way, it's not enough just to put all of the content in the module. There should be a logical or linear flow to it. And most of our students are accessing our courses on their mobile devices, their tablets, and we should think about the behavior they have when they're accessing those mobile devices. What are they doing? Most of the time they're scrolling. If you access any social media platform, any mobile friendly website, there is a linear designed to the placement of everything where there isn't a chronological order or is in the order of in play importance. Maybe there is an algorithm where the most interesting things appear at the top. There is a logical sequencing that goes to that, and we should model that in our online courses and capitalize on that behavior students already have. So just to give a couple of examples, let's say I'm teaching a principles management course and my course is organized where I cover a chapter a week so we get jumped to the next slide. At my university we use canvas. So this is what canvas modules look like. So it's important for me to know what I want my students to do first, because if I don't know the answer to that question, the students are not going to know the answer to that. They should be able to intuitively have a good sense of direction. So with weekly chapter modules, the modules are labeled by the week of the semester we're in as well as these specific dates. So they always know where they're supposed to be. I also put the most current module at the top when they finish a module. I drag it down to the bottom. I keep it published so they can still reference it later. But the very first thing they're going to see is what is current. I have a distinction between where the learning materials are and where the assignments are, and I have a chronological order. So the first thing that I want the students to do is look at the introduction, which is a page, and they have the chapter overview, the learning outcomes, the chapter reading assignment, all of that is in that particular page. Then there is the lecture video and then after that some short videos and assignments that I want them to cut, some articles I want them to read before they ever get to their actual assignments. Every module looks like this. So there's a consistency. Every module starts with the introduction, then the learning materials. There's a distinction. Everything is labeled and that's using simple text headers so they know exactly where everything is supposed to be. But maybe that structure doesn't work for your class. Maybe you teach a class where you don't cover a chapter in a week. Your chapters might be more extensive. You might spend several weeks on a chapter. Or maybe you don't teach a class where you use a textbook. Maybe you use outside materials. So let's say you are a music professor that teaches music history on a course of major composers of the Baroque period. So if we can jump to our next slide, you can organize your modules by topic in this particular module. You have a different module for every composer. So this module is on Bach and students will spend a couple of weeks in this module. So maybe the first week you want to focus on the biography and lifestyle of Bach. So students might have some articles to read, maybe a short documentary to watch, and then they'll complete their assignment for that. And then the next week, they'll focus on listening assignments, listening to some of his major works and possibly looking at some modern influences. So there is a clear distinction of what they're supposed to do in what week, what the topics are, where the learning materials are, where their assignments are. And even though this module is not weekly, there is still a weekly pattern within the module where they're completing certain assignments every week. And those assignments are due at the same time, the same day every week. So there are different ways that you can organize the module depending on how your class is

structured. The key things to keep in mind is making sure there is a linear chronological flow, making sure there is consistency. There is a pattern that helps students to stay on track when they know every week in this class. I have a quiz. Thursday, every Monday, there is a discussion that consistency helps them to stay on track. I believe labeling as much as possible cuts down on confusion, it cuts down on them, trying to figure out what they're supposed to do. It reduces the guesswork and keeping everything in a consistent pattern. So those are just some recommendations on different ways you can organize your modules.

[00:17:24] Wonderful thanks, April. Alyson and Mike, do you have any thoughts about what April shared?

[00:17:30] Yes, I enthusiastically agree with everything that April said. I love the organization she has in her canvas modules. One thing that I also do on is I use a backwards design. So as April moves her weeks to the ends, I released my weeks backwards one by one. So as April said, students are a little bit less overwhelmed and less confused if they're seeing things in order like that. And I love the way that you separated the resources and the assignments. I think that's a really good idea to help students stay organized. And again, you know, I would like to echo on the importance of having that consistency so that students know what to expect every single week. I think that's definitely key.

[00:18:26] Yeah, and I just want to add. There's been an interesting conversation and a Q&A that got a lot of thumbs up, which means apparently lot people are interested in this.

[00:18:35] And it's this question of whether or not you organize it by week or by subject. And I'd love to hear more in the Q&A to hear what what people are thinking about. That, in my general sense, is that if you want to do it by a subject, that would be really great for a self-paced course. Whereas if you do it by week. The nice thing you get is if you get a sort of communal thing happening where everybody's dealing with the same material the same time, which facilitates great discussions and things like that. So that's my first take on it. But I might not fully understand the question. So please elaborate in the Q&A more and we will continue to try to address that question.

[00:19:11] Sure. And I think I can take a crack at it as well. And so in my own course, I have modules that last three weeks and they are based on specific guiding questions. But as April pointed out, I have a very consistent structure that the first week they do the specific set of activities. The second week, a different set in the third week, a third set. And so I think regardless of what framework you use to organize your course, whether it be weeks of the semester chapters of a textbook, topics like systems of the body, if you're teaching an anatomy class, whatever you choose, be consistent throughout your academic terms. The students know what to expect because not everybody teaches the same way.

[00:19:54] But we want to provide a sense of consistency within a particular course. What is really a parent is that you think you make a really great team. Mike, are you ready for your segment?

[00:20:06] Yeah, sure. So some of you might have heard there is a new verb zoomed out and a lot of students are saying they're zoomed out right now, meaning they just don't like getting in front of zoom over and over and over again. And so some of the examples you just saw are actually examples that can actually get people away from the computer. I like to think of. Well, let me just show you MySpace here. You know, I'm down in a basement

and you know, I've got this is like a workshop here. It's the cat space. It's the old toy space. I only have one little window up here, and that's the cat door. I don't. The point is, I don't want to be down here. And so I come down here to do zoom until I connect, answer emails and then I'm out. You know, I take my notebook and I go wherever I can and get some good light. And that's where I can think better and that kind of thing. And I think that's important because because you have to be thinking about not just organizing your class, you're really organizing people's lives. You know, when you're demand of them to be in front of asume three times a week at your, you're shaping their life. So I want to point out that your class is not online. Those are just the instructions. And secondly, I want to point out that you are not just decide designing a class, you're actually designing about 10 percent of their lives as well as a community and maybe 20 or 100 percent of your own life for the next few weeks. So you really have to think about these decisions as you know, like weigh heavily on the lives of many people. You can see I I drew all mine because I don't like working on the computer at this time, because I don't like being down here in the basement. So so I went upstairs and drew these. This is what my class looks like. This is what a module looks like in my class. And you can see it's very similar to what you've seen. It's basically a summary then a bunch of awesome content. Cuase discussion and activity. And then I always have feedback. And feedback goes both ways. So I give them feedback and then I also invite them to give me feedback so I can change things. And I point out to students that you can just lay a thing on here for time. Spent two to three hours on the content, two to three hours on the quizzes and discussion, two to three hours on the activity and sort of organize your week that way. Like, I just kind of promised them this is gonna be six to nine hours of your time every week and kind of breaks down like that when you click on the summary. You get a page that looks like this. And what this is, is you can see at the top is a it's actually recorded zoom, meaning that takes about 20 minutes. And that stands as the opening of the class. I recorded that zoom meeting on Monday mornings. Everything is due Sunday night.

[00:22:49] And then Monday morning we launch the new module and we have a live Zoom meeting that's not mandatory. They can come if they want and we can hang out for up to an hour. Just discussing hanging out the first 20 minutes is me going over the big ideas for the week and that becomes the intro video for the week so they can get a quick overview. Then underneath that they have a download all button and that's actually an MP3 as well as a PDF. So if they're mobile, they get an MP3 and as all the materials for the week and they can just listen while they commute, while they're working, whatever they want to do. And then under that I've got print this outline because under here is the big ideas and I usually have about six to 10. Big idea. The week and then I have the to do list and along with the times that I mentioned there. So you notice when you use the module's function, which is really great. And April mentioned this the linear nature of the module also includes a next button, and that's super important for students and helping them find their way. So so when you this is what a summary looks like for me. So students can print this out. You can see it's got these big ideas here. And these are not like memorize these and you get an A on the exam. These are more like sort of big questions like this is about world religions. So, you know, are all religions really the same at some level? Is a big question, is religion toxic or tonic is a big question. There's some big things that we're going to talk about that week. Then you look at the content pages and, you know, it might be like some sort of framing here, sort of like what Kevin was talking about, like, why is this important? And then you get the documentary or video, the next button. You might include podcast again, make sure you include why is this important? And then when there's a reading, this is maybe a little above and beyond. And you have to monitor your own time to see if you have time to do this. But when there's a reading, you have to download the PDA. But then I also have a recording of me reading the reading with my commentary. And that, again,

improves accessibility and also improves access for people who just are on the move and want to listen rather than free. So then the mobile experience translates over really nicely. When you use the modules, when you use the elements, the elements is designed to move across platforms. And so it looks great on mobile. Looks just like it did on the computer. Then other nice thing is when you hit the MP3 button here, it automatically opens on your phone and instantly you're listening to the three hours of content. So the mobile experience is ultimately something like this. You know, students get it. They can get out. They can get away from the computer and they get to listen to all this great content for a few hours and then come back to a computer to discuss and do the zoom thing or whatever it is that you have set up for that more communal feel. So then you gotta figure out how to do all this. I just wanted to briefly show you what my week looks like. Basically, you know, you have to first you have to find all the awesome content. You have to frame it right. Those little framing paragraphs. You have to read it if you want to and record it, summarize it. Write that summary with the big ideas. You write the quiz and discussion questions, write activity instructions like your assignment and so on. Host the optional zoom overview that takes about an hour and then record and post as your intro video. So those are the eight things I have to do every week to create the content for my class. You can see I've put some time estimates here of what it takes me to do that. And sometimes I already have all the awesome content like some of you have mentioned. You know, you're already teaching me how the content you have to put it in to the module. So maybe you only have to take about one or two hours to do that. But if you're starting from scratch, it can take six, nine, even more. In general, though, you can see I'm looking for a total of ten to fifteen hours just to create the content. And then I also have to engage with my students and give them feedback and so on that on average my class is gonna take me about 20 hours. This can flip very differently if you're teaching an upper level or a writing intensive class or something like that where you're actually not spending much time creating content because the students are the ones creating content. In that case, you might be spending ten to fifteen hours, you know, actually giving them feedback rather than creating all of this. So it can be very different depending on the class. But I just wanted to show you some basic background. And then the other piece I want to just encourage you again, thinking about you're really designing a life for them, not just a class. And so I encourage you to have their assignments like away from the computer if possible, and get them outside, get them connecting with people or whatever. It is just something that might actually be good for their mental health and also build toward your class. And if you want some examples, my website is theone2one.com. This is basically the way I teach introduction to cultural anthropology. It's really collectively built. You know, I started the Web site a few years ago with Ryan Kotecki, my colleague here, and it's wide open and people share. And so it's really changed quite a bit over the years as people share different things.

[00:28:01] But those are all about like getting out and being out in the world, not just online.

[00:28:08] Many thanks, Mike, some great ideas there. And I know some people were interested in seeing all of the images that you held up to the camera. Some people weren't able to see them. Also, maybe we can work on it either scanning those or posting them with the resources for this particular webinar.

[00:28:27] We'll work with the team to do that. And somebody had asked for the Web site. It's now in the chat. Thank you, Christine. April and Alyson. Would you like to reflect or build on what Mike showed us?

[00:28:40] Yes. So, first of all, Mike, I really love your drawings. I think that's absolutely awesome. One thing that you pointed out that I think is really important in this really goes into managing expectations with the students, is giving them an idea of how long it's going to take for them to do something. I don't know about your students, but mine tend to wait until the last minute and they underestimate how long it's going to take them to complete an assignment. But if they have a good sense that this particular reading is going to take me about an hour. This particular assignment is going to take me about 30 minutes. That really helps them with their planning and giving of Thirroul instructions because we're not in the classroom with them. We can't stand over them until them. And there is not that live interactive feedback. And usually when students ask us a question, there is a delay when they get that response. And if they're struggling with something and we take too long to get back with them, they can get frustrated and they either won't turn the assignment in or they'll turn it in. Poorly done. So our communication with them, the way we give them instructions, the way we manage the expectations, really does have an impact on their ability to successfully complete the class. So I love everything you said.

[00:29:55] Michael.

[00:29:58] I would just like to add that in addition to on being flexible with time or students taking different amounts of time to complete their works or their assignments, my class, all my classes are on writing heavy writing intensive courses. So when I was thinking about how I was going to transition online and you know, how I would record lectures or conversations, I do what Mike is doing. I'm uploading videos on that I've previously recorded so that students can visit the videos when it's convenient for them. And I also my students write on a pretty extensive analytical report and it's a group project. So it's been great on that. They're still able to go into a collaborate room and work one on one with their group life and then meet with me on. So instead of doing whole group meetings, I'm doing small group readings. So all week I'm meeting with groups of students back to back. And it's been really, really exciting to see their progress, progress, despite all of the struggles that we're facing today.

[00:31:17] Great. Well, I'd like to thank all three of you for getting this conversation started and we now have lots of practical ideas and strategies. But as you were all talking, the participants posted quite a few questions. So let's tackle some of those, starting with.

[00:31:35] Some interesting thought prompts here. Could we get some ideas of what a poor design might look like? What are some common pitfalls that those of us might still do? Even after watching this presentation, do you all have some?

[00:31:54] Actually, have a question. And I pulled up my first design, which I think is pretty terrible.

[00:32:00] I can either share my screen or maybe other people can see this if I do this. Can people see that? I don't know if the participants can see it or not once.

[00:32:11] Why don't you describe it? Just in case

[00:32:14] That's basically what it is, is it's a paper syllabus, digitized, didn't get onto the main page. And I really thought this is a good idea. The first time, I'm sure a lot of people do think this is a good idea and this is like the only page. And then so when you wanted to like it needed to go somewhere, you know, you look at like you basically go to the schedule, you see what you're supposed to do and then you'd have to go to files and you'd

have to like find the file that I reference in the syllabus. And then I thought I got really clever by linking the file in the syllabus, you know? And so it builds over time. But ultimately it was nothing as clean as the modules. And I also had this problem. You can see there's discussions and conferences and collaborations and chat. And those four things confuse students to no end. You know, they just didn't know where the discussion is happening because of those four different things. Same thing with assignments and files. And then there used to be quizzes here as well. I think I eliminated that. But when there was a quiz, students didn't know if they had to find that assignment or the quiz. So, you know, you just have to like you can go into settings and eliminate a lot of these. I actually have this down to just two links now, so that doesn't get confusing at all. Just sort of posting your syllabus is one bad night as like the main thing is, is one bad design decision. I think one possibility for better.

[00:33:35] Donnally requires a lot of scrolling, which Alyson recommends we don't do. Alyson, you're about to say something.

[00:33:42] Yeah, I was going to jump in and say something about if your students are clicking and scrolling too much on, it's probably an issue. I found that, you know, minimal clicking is probably best because it's very, very easy to get lost. It kind of reminds me of like a Matrix movie where you, like, enter and there's no exits.

[00:34:04] So it's be cautious about that.

[00:34:09] Another pitfall we need to watch out for is being too texty or too wordy.

[00:34:15] When I first started teaching online, I would post announcements at the beginning of the week and my announcements would be super long. And one day I just had this epiphany. I was like, they're not going to read all of this. So I started doing video announcements which increased the connection with me and the students because they were able to see my face, hear my voice, and I would still put, you know, some main text in the announcement so that they can still read it. They can still visualize that. But things like instructions, things like announcements, if it's too much words, you know, our students today, their attention spans are a lot shorter. They're in this social media age where you have a hundred and fifty characters. You know, they're used to shorter amounts of text. And we have a tendency to just explain and explain. So condensing as much as possible, I think it's very effective because the reality is we may want them to read all of it, but a lot of times they're not. So condensing it is extremely important and having other ways other than just text. So if you can do a video, if you can do an image as many different ways as you can, that not only increases the likelihood that they'll read it or listen to it, but as Mike said, it also increases accessibility.

[00:35:32] That's it. That's even a universal design for learning practice, where you have multiple formats of the materials and activities and you make some good points, April, about how students work or are used to working online. So one person and several votes ask how do we outsmart the students who skipped right to the assignments and never review the content, whether it's in the form of readings or videos?

[00:36:05] So one thing that I do canvas has in canvas.

[00:36:10] You have the ability to lock content in your modules. So I actually have a settings so that the assignments are not accessible until they have viewed the introduction page and viewed the lecture video and all of those other things. Now they have to click on

it and it has to be visible on their screen. They might not actually read it, but they at least will have to see it before they're able to access the assignment. So I use the built in feature and canvas to lock content. And I also have it set so that it has to be completed in chronological order so they can't skip around if they want to. So there is that feature and canvas.

[00:36:49] And I'll just say I do the same thing.

[00:36:52] April. And yet I know that some students are just like they they know ways to get around this, right. There's there's really no way. And so from the moment I started teaching online, I knew the bar had been raised tremendously in terms of how engaging my content needed to be.

[00:37:08] And I have really, really worked hard on creating or finding awesome content. I think there's nothing really replaces that and that that answers a lot of the questions about engaging and all that kind of stuff. The best way to create to find awesome content isn't necessarily find stuff that's awesome to you. It's about getting to know your students and knowing what's gonna be awesome to them and knowing that there's a wide range of students in your class and thinking about what could be really compelling for starting a great discussion. And, you know, you get stuff that people want to watch so that they can have an awesome discussion and you create a culture of engagement, basically a culture of engagement, not just, you know, trying to trick them, so to speak. Right. It's so hard. It's so hard. And with and with everybody on this, this is this is not easy.

[00:37:58] So, yeah.

[00:38:00] I think providing the students with relevant, meaningful content is huge. Many of my students, especially because I teach at a community college, are struggling with managing work and families along with their schoolwork. So I make sure that I never assign anything that doesn't have a great value to the students. And like Mike mentioned, you know, at the beginning of the module, it is great to remind students what exactly they're going to gain by completing the assignments and meeting your learning objectives. I think that definitely helps. But, you know, there's as we all know, as educators, there's no way to force the students to do everything, but in any way we can direct them or encourage them. It's definitely beneficial.

[00:38:54] Another thing is to create an opportunity cost if they don't review the instructional materials. In my lecture videos, I like to incorporate things that are not going to be in the textbook. Maybe some real life examples. And then I will put questions about that in the quiz. So my students know if we don't watch the lecture videos, there's going to be a lot of questions on the quiz that we're not going to be able to answer. And students are motivated differently. Some of them respond better to rewards and some of them respond better to punishments. And not that we're punishing them in a sense. But they should know that, hey, you can skip this if you want to. But in the end, it's going to affect how successful you're able to complete these assignments. So there should be both. But ultimately, the student has to take ownership of their learning and we can do everything in the world to try to motivate them to, you know, read the chapter or watch the videos, read the articles. But if they don't want to, then we can't force them. It has to be something that they want for themselves. We can't want it more for them than they do.

[00:40:04] These are all amazing ideas, and I know some of the folks in the crowd and some people even mentioned it in the Q&A session are just starting their remote teaching

experience for the first time. So is there anything that you might prioritize and then move to this remote teaching experience and the remote learning experience for students with respect to how you organize the course and also communicate to students about that organization? One of the things that you came up with April in terms of the opportunity cost, nice marketing and and management language, there is the concept of having things embedded in the content that they'll need later. So sometimes it's nice to let students know and your communications remind them of how the things are interconnected or to put that rationale in the content itself as well as the activities and the outcomes pages. I know I let students know which learning outcomes from my course will be met by reviewing certain content and how it interplays with the activities. But the question about what could people prioritize if they're just starting this remote teaching and learning experience for the first time? Do you all have one or two pieces of advice you would share?

[00:41:34] OK, so I'll start. I would say to simplify as much as possible. When you have weeks and months to plan an online course, you can be more robust. You can incorporate a lot more bells and whistles. I think at this point, since we are essentially in survival mode, there are a lot of professors that are teaching online for the very first time. They have students that have been online for the first time and there is this natural tendency for us to try to get it perfect at this point. You know, if you can't do fancy videos, Mike has drawn stuff on paper with colorful markers. I think that's awesome. So I would say simplify as much as possible. Don't try to be extra and communicate as much as you can with your students. So if you're going to do weekly modules, tell the students that and then show them how to work through those modules. I posted a module orientation video. It was it was two minutes long and it showed them where to go, how to click through, showing them as much as possible, labeling as much as possible, explaining as much as possible, and keeping everything centralized as much as possible. But simplicity and consistency.

[00:42:52] Go ahead, Alyson. OK. Thank you. So one of the things that I was going to say and this was mentioned in an earlier webinar, I can't remember who said it, but someone said that we could post things to challenge students. So I know me as an instructor. I just have tons of things that I want to share. And, you know, like we're talking about today and like what April just said, we're in survival mode. Many of us so try to like be very selective about the things that you are requiring the students to do. And then, you know, if you feel it necessary, have an extra module that is to challenge the students who are breezing through the material and have the time or maybe, you know, that self-drive to want to do those extra assignments on, because then I think it makes us both feel better because we feel like we're able to share all those great things we have, but we're not requiring everyone to do those particular assignments. So that might help.

[00:43:58] Yeah, I totally agree is basically what I was going to say is similar, I was I would say lower the bar across the board, lower your expectations across the board, but then create space for emergence of things that you just can't even imagine right now, including a space to talk about what's happening in the world right now in terms of your discipline, which is the case for a lot of different disciplines. This relates to a lot of different things. So there is a space there and keeping the stress level down on the requirements might create a space for emergence on top of that. And that's where you can have that extra stuff. And, you know, if you're that most of us kind of live inside our disciplines anyway, we get excited about things. And, you know, don't be afraid to share your excitement with students as you find things, you know. So having less requirements allows that space for spontaneity.

[00:44:53] Want to pivot to a set of questions that all relate to a similar theme, and that's things that stretch across more than one week or module.

[00:45:03] One question asked how do you scaffold major assignments if the modules aren't released until later? And another person asks, where do you put course resources that a could apply to many of the modules? And so I want to put it out there to all of you within an organizational structure. And actually another person asked, how do you place synchronous meetings in the organization of the course, especially if they're happy happening on a regular basis. So those are three different aspects. Now, I'll ask you to tackle one or more and see what we come up with for our audience.

[00:45:40] Well, in as I mentioned in my course on, I have a long term group project that my students have been working on, on. So in the module, because I designed my modules to be weekly, I have a content folder called formal in a little core report. And in that folder the students can access everything related to the report that might not be in the weekly sessions that we're currently working on. I also give the students on a very transparent assignment sheet so that they know exactly what is due when. So if they want to move ahead, they are able to go into that in a little report folder and access assignments that they're going to encounter, you know, weeks from now. So that can be very beneficial.

[00:46:38] One of the things that I do in my course, I know I mentioned that when when the students get through a module, I push it down to the bottom. But there are some modules, for instance, if we're working on a project where I will keep them module anchored to the top. So there might be one module just for that project. There might be one module just for some resources that I want them to use. And I always leave that one at the top. But then I move my weekly modules as we progressed through them. So you can create a module just for resources and leave it in one spot. So the students always know where to go.

[00:47:14] Yeah, and there's and there's also just nothing that keeps you from keeping all the modules open all the time and students can you can actually create a video about how to manage the modules so that they can do it because they can collapse them and open them and things like that to make it look nice. You have to show them how to do that, at least in canvas. Again, not sure about other platforms, but I I also run a huge project. I do a documentary film class and that's a fifteen week project. And it and I just chunk it up so that every week they're doing a different challenge. I call it a challenge. But ultimately, each challenge results in a new level of their film being developed, you know, and you get to challenge 12 minutes sound design and they're adding that layer of sound to their video and things like that. So each challenge builds and eventually they end up with a documentary at the end. So I think it's fully possible within the module framework.

[00:48:11] Like Michael, I have those three week modules and they have to, in the beginning of the module, take some review some materials and take some quizzes, but then they come up with a plan on how they're going to apply, what they've won concept from the course to their life, and then they'll actually do that for a couple of weeks. And then at the end of the module, they'll reflect on how it went and what they would do differently. And so they do that building, as Michael described. But something else, maybe because April is in the field of management, I'm thinking of business. I always say links are cheap. So I link to resources that are used more than once from every single place that students may need to reference it because it doesn't take any extra work really to copy and paste that link. And it allows students to have in an adjusted time fashion. I also do that with resources outside my course that they might need. For example, if I'm going to have them write an essay, then I'll link to the writing center and how they can get help over

distance for a remote learning experience with their writing if they need it. So those are all great ideas about how to address topics or issues that stretch over multiple modules or weeks. And further, the question related to the synchronous meetings. Again, you could have a different link. Each module to the same zoom room if you're using Zoom. I know nowadays they're recommending different ways to approach links to Zoom, to avoid what are called zoom bombers, people who jump on to zoom links that become known somehow or shared. So you may want to think about maybe constructing a new zoom link for each meeting and then you would just put those in the context of your modules. I know we're running close to the end of our Q&A period and there was one about organization for grading and I thought that would be maybe a nice one to start thinking about for people who are heading toward the end of their academic terms here in April and into May. They want to know about grading online homework by hand and organizing it for the students and for themselves. How do you take things that you're receiving by email or submitted through the learning management system or some other format? How do you how do you recommend they organize, collect grade and return written work?

[00:50:50] I'm a big proponent of students only submitting assignments through an assignment link in the mess because when they email it, sometimes that e-mail doesn't come through or the email gets lost or I forget about the email. But when you're collecting assignments, it's good to streamline that and have it all coming into one place. I recommend even if they are you know, if it's something they have to upload, if it's an image or something, you can still create an assignment link and have them upload it. There are different formats you can do file formats, video where documents. There are different formats for how you can upload an assignment. So I would say stick to the assignment links and then I also like to use rubrics. That's just so that I can let my students know what the expectation is. As far as what I'm looking for and how I'm going to be grading it and how they received a certain grade. So I would say rubrics and the assignment lengths just to keep everything streamlined and in one place.

[00:51:52] I have to agree with April on the sometimes students will say, well, I tried to upload an assignment to Blackboard in my case and it didn't go through. I would rather help the student learn how to attach the assignment than have to worry about how they're submitting it, like through email, for example, because it's going to keep you sane and it's going to help your students with consistency because it's just too difficult to be worrying about how you're going to receive these assignments to grade them. So I think it's easy enough to help a student upload it. As far as the actual grading, I to utilize rubrics so that the students know what I'm expecting of them and then to give them feedback. There are so many options if you don't like to type on. You can give them audio feedback on their assignments. You can do insert comments and track changes in word. Or you could use some of the tools in your specific elements to insert comments all over the student's assignments. So they're still getting that great feedback that they're used to receiving from us. It's just they're receiving electronically instead.

[00:53:14] Yeah, I can't emphasize enough how much better it is to use the elements for grading. I'm not sure what it looks like in Blackboard or Desire to Learn or some of those other ones. But on canvas there is a thing called speed greater keeps everything very organized for you. You look at one and like Allison was just saying, like, I'm just looking at one right now. You can highlight things, you can add text, you can draw on it, you can add audio. Like you said, you can. You can post a quick video. You can just actually like what I have often done is actually turn on the video recorder on canvas right after I read it once and then I go back through it. And I just talked to the student about what I'm seeing and what I think could improve for next time and things like that. It's super fast. I speak much

faster than I can type. And so I I I find it very, very efficient to do it that way. And I think it would work for just about any discipline. I know there was a question about how to grade math. I would think it would work for that. And I might even maybe get a tablet for that so that I could draw, you know, I would pick the pen tool and I would probably just like write on there and have students scanned in or take a picture of their work and post it here. And that's how I would do it.

[00:54:30] Another convenient thing about using the speed grader in canvas or whatever else mess you're using is students can leave feedback on your feedback. So if I'm making comments on an assignment they turned in, they can make a comment to my comment. There have been times and we've had a whole conversation about the assignment just in the comments section. In the in the feedback area. So that's another reason why using the Elam's for submitting assignments is beneficial.

[00:54:57] Absolutely. And I I usually recommend that the teachers think about the student experience. So I love how Michael just pointed out that, you know, for things like math, having students take a picture with their phone and submit it that way, they may only have a phone. I've had students in my classes who are living in their car and aren't able to write papers. So I tell them, just send me a link to a Google doc. If you can't use Microsoft Word, so increase the flexibility if you can of the formats that students can use to submit their work. And I definitely agree with everyone that doing it through the learning management system increases your ability to provide feedback in multiple ways, as April pointed out, to connect directly to the gradebook so they can see how those points play for their final grade. And all that. So but definitely think of the equity issues. Folks who are in rural areas as students may not have really great internet connectivity. So having them do things that are low bandwidth and asynchronous are helpful for sure. So I know that we have more questions, but we are just about out of time. And and Christine has been great in the chat pointing out that we will be answering these questions and more on the webinar page. So how about this? First, I'd like to thank the panelists for an incredible discussion. And we hope that this is just the start of a longer conversation. So all of you in the audience. We hope that you'll join us on the webinar page. At that webinar page, you'll find the discussion board that will be moderated by ACUE and the experts over the next couple of weeks. And you'll also be able to find a recording of today's session and a transcript. So we hope you'll visit and add your thoughts. We will also be sharing an email tomorrow with the link to the webinar recording, and that will also include a short survey for feedback. So on the next slide, as many of you know, ACUE's focuses on how to teach well, regardless of what you teach. So during this shift to remote teaching and learning, we appreciate that some of you may be looking for quality digital content right now and you can find a variety of open educational resources to meet this need that we are, as they're sometimes called, come in different digital formats like videos or worksheets, even activities or assessments. Most of them are free and don't require passwords. You'll see a link here to OpenStax. Our colleagues there are happy to help as well. If you don't know about open stacks, it's Rice University initiative that's committed to improving access to quality learning materials. They've developed a variety of resources like the ones I described, as well as over 20 educational technology products that are now available for free. New learning management system integration for their open stacks, books and subject specific lists of ancillary teaching and learning resources. On the last slide and the next slide. Finally, we'd like to remind you that the resources reference today will be available at the ACUE Web site, along with other key resources and responses at our partners Web sites. As you can see here, the links will be on that page. And last but not least, we hope you'll join us for upcoming webinars about planning and facilitating quality discussions, recording effective micro lectures and engaging students in reading and micro lectures, where we'll be joined

again by Mike and April, along with Flower Darby, Viji Sathy, Ludwika Goodson, Catherine Haras and others. So thank you all again. Thank you, presenters. Stay safe, everyone, and have a great online class.