



THE UNIVERSITY of
MISSISSIPPI
The Center for Excellence in
Teaching and Learning

eMantle

October 2015

Volume 4, Number 1

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT LUNCHEON

MENTORING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN GRADUATE SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Presented by a Panel of University
Graduate Deans
Moderated by Maurice Eftink

Thursday, October 15, 2015
11:45 AM
Union Ballroom

A complimentary lunch will be provided.

Please RSVP **Online** by **5:00 PM,**
Monday, October 12, 2015.
www.cetl.olemiss.edu

New Faculty Session

(open to faculty new to UM
in the past 2 year)

“Instructional Diagnosis: The Benefits of Classroom Teaching Observations over Student Evaluations as Measures of Quality Instruction”

Presented by Angela Green and Chad
Russell, Department of Writing and
Rhetoric

Wednesday, October 21, 2015
3:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Hill Hall room 117

RSVP is requested by Monday,
October 19-2015

5 Tips for Teaching Terrifically Online

*By Deb Wenger, Associate Professor & Director of Undergraduate Journalism,
CETL Advisory Board Member*

Online instruction has been a part of the university for more than a decade, and the course offerings have exploded in recent years. Though much has been written about how students should prepare for online classes, here are a few thoughts about what teachers may want to keep in mind:

1. **Prepare yourself for an email onslaught.** It doesn't matter how much help you get in course design from the great staff at Online Design & eLearning, students are going to have questions – and yes, some will have already been answered clearly in the course materials, but get over it. If you take those questions as a sign of student interest and a desire to do well, you'll be better able to approach those missives in the right spirit. (Even when they ask questions like, “Is the optional in-person meeting mandatory?”)
2. **Reminders rock.** This was a big “aha moment” for me when I participated in a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) on Google Analytics. The kind instructors at Google sent out reminders about what needed to get accomplished each week and that saved my bacon. I realized through that experience that it is harder to stay on top of classes that don't have set meeting times, so I no longer consider sending out reminders as pandering to students – it's just a good instructional method – especially for an online course.
3. **Lots of low stakes assignments.** In a class that includes hundreds of students, it can seem overwhelming to consider discussion boards and writing prompts, but with rubrics and nominal points assigned to each one, you can get through grading the content fairly quickly. These assignments can help students think more critically about the content of the course and can be used as a guide to figure out what course content you need to reinforce or revise as an instructor.
4. **Consistent tasks and deadlines.** The more systematic you can make the course, the better for you and the students. For example, creating quizzes that students must complete by the same time each week is going to go a long way toward helping students figure out what they need to do and when. If you do add in a “one time only” project or assignment, be sure to give plenty of warning and plenty of reminders – that will save you from at least some of the anxiety-ridden student emails.
5. **Offer a “grace” assignment.** Students are going to miss assignments, so you need to have a strategy for how you will address their pleas. You can create a “no exceptions” policy, but you might also consider this approach: Tell the students that, if they are borderline for a better grade – perhaps a 79.3 or an 89.2, you will allow them to do a make-up assignment at the end of the semester, which may push them over the threshold. Put the onus on the student to contact you by a given date (Nov. 15? April 15?), and you will likely find the number of make-up requests to be relatively few. (In my class of 240 in spring 2015, I had approximately 10 students who took advantage

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of the “grace” assignment.)

Online instruction is not for everyone, and it may not be right for every class, but it can be a way to re-energize yourself as a teacher and to begin thinking differently about best practices for helping students to learn.

Debora Wenger is an associate professor and director of undergraduate journalism in the Meek School of Journalism & New Media. Her course, “Introduction to Multimedia Writing,” helped her win the university’s Paragon Award for online instruction in 2015.

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