CELT Teaching Tip • March 11, 2021

Discover what's working for your students

You can learn a great deal about how your students are learning in a course and what adjustments both you and your students might make by asking your students to give your course a mid-term evaluation or periodic feedback.

Using a formative course feedback tool such as the Plus/Delta tool creates an excellent opportunity to discuss the shared responsibility for teaching and learning in a course. You can describe what changes you will (or will not) implement due to their feedback and why.


With a joy for teaching,

Sara Marcketti, Director
Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Midterm grade submissions are due on Mar. 19 (2:15 p.m.)


CELT Teaching Spotlight: Jameel Kelley

Alejandro Plastina, Ph.D., Associate Professor/Extension Economist, Department of Economics, received the Excellence in Remote Instruction COVID-19 Exceptional Effort Award (https://bit.ly/39wIjSj) for adapting ECON 330: Advanced Farm Business Management to an exceptional hands-on but the entirely online format. This honor “This award recognizes a faculty or staff instructor who has made exceptional efforts to successfully transform courses into engaging and accessible remote teaching platforms while maintaining an exceptional standard of quality.”

Plastina’s advice for teaching:

I teach ECON 330: Advanced Farm Business Management with a significant focus on applied financial management decisions. I draw upon the Ag Decision Maker website for course materials which creates an excellent synergy between the decision tools I develop for my extension program and the materials I use to teach. In-class teamwork to solve investment decision problems and individual homework involving the use of specialized farm financial software to identify areas of improvement in the whole farm operation are pivotal to the hands-on approach of ECON 330.

Two major challenges to teaching online were finding ways to engage students in meaningful teamwork during our synchronous sessions and introducing new software skills with only one screen to show students how the software works and implement the analyses simultaneously.

Courses organized by CELT (Using the ISU course template; Course Design Institute (http://bit.ly/celt-cdi2021); Top 10 tips for creating an accessible course) and the Brenton Center (https://www.brenton.iastate.edu/) (How to use the
communication tools in Canvas to interact with your students, How to set up and use Webex in Canvas) were instrumental not only in helping me set up the course structure to foster student success, but also to spark my interest in finding collaborative platforms integrated into Canvas.

I incorporated Piazza (https://bit.ly/isu-piazza) to expand the communication channels with and between students. I designed a system that combines synchronous group discussions (in breakout sessions) and collaborative editing of Canvas-Collaborations documents (Google Suite) (https://bit.ly/3bq4ThU). I created five documents with questions and problems to solve before class in Canvas-Collaborations, and had the links to those documents close at hand before class. I randomly assigned students to five breakout sessions during class, and I shared one link with each group. All students in the same breakout session could orally discuss how to complete the assignment and simultaneously edit the one document assigned to the team. This system eliminated the need for students to submit the completed work to me since I could access it via Canvas-Collaborations.

Additionally, the Department of Economics IT staff did a great job making the farm financial analysis software available to all students via Remote Desktop in the Heady Computer Lab. They provided licenses free of charge for students who wanted to install the software on their PCs (not available for Mac computers). However, since it is almost impossible to implement real-time instructions via video in Webex into the financial software using only one screen, I created introductory mini-lectures (see CELT’s video creation strategies, https://bit.ly/celt-vid) for different software modules. Or I used existing short videos to help students familiarize themselves with the software before class and limited the synchronous session time devoted to teaching software skills to a minimum. To make up for the lack of verbal guidance during the practice sessions, I developed much more detailed (step-by-step) instructions for each of the assignments requiring the use of specialized software.

**Upcoming CELT 2021 Programming**

CELT offers face-to-face one-off workshops/webinars, longer-term teaching and learning circles on selected topics, and facilitation of teaching and learning communities. Our program listing with descriptions and registration information may be found on the corresponding page on CELT’s event listed via ISU’s Events Calendar (http://bit.ly/celtevents) or CELT’s programming schedule via ISU’s Events Calendar website (http://bit.ly/celt-isu-events).

**Instructional Tools News and Updates**

Stay up to date on ISU-approved learning technologies

Bookmark CELT’s Instructional Tools News & Updates page (https://bit.ly/35g7KqL). Questions about these updates? Email celt-help@iastate.edu.

**Know where to go at ISU**

- **Canvas support:** Locate the ? Help menu (far left of your screen in Canvas) and use one of the resources or for 24/7 support, call 515-294-4000 (listen to prompts for Canvas support).
- **Technical support:** ISU Solution Center, email solution@iastate.edu or call 515-294-4000.
- **Pedagogical support:** CELT Response Team is available each Tuesday-Friday (11 a.m.-1 p.m.). Call 515-294-5357. Or, contact our CELT instructional designers by emailing your course title, describing the question or issues you have, and the steps to replicate it to celt-help@iastate.edu. This step will also create a ServiceNow ticket for easy tracking.
- **Local support:** Contact your local support (https://www.celt.iastate.edu/support/).
CELT Mission and Contact Information

CELT’s mission is “Partnering with educators to advance student-centered learning at Iowa State University.” Contact us for consultations, questions, and comments via phone: 515-294-5357, email: celt@iastate.edu, or on our website: http://www.celt.iastate.edu/. Our physical office is in 3024 Morrill Hall, 603 Morrill Road, Ames, IA 50011-2100

How to contact us

Contact CELT via email at celt@iastate.edu or call 515-294-5357. We will forward your information to the appropriate staff member or contact the CELT staff directly (https://bit.ly/celt-staff) to schedule a meeting in a safe manner (virtually or face-to-face social-distanced).

Questions about teaching with technology?

Connect with our CELT instructional designers for support or pedagogical consultations by emailing celt-help@iastate.edu; this will also create a ServiceNow ticket for easy tracking.