MINNESOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY
M A N K A T O

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Faculty and Student Qualitative Analysis Report
2020

Prepared For:

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota

Prepared By:

The Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research

Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota

Project Team

Brooke Burk | Director

CETL
brooke.burk@mnsu.edu
507.389.3233

Hannah Radcliff-Hoy | Coordinator

CETL
hannah.radcliff-hoy.2@mnsu.edu
507.514.0040

Report Team

Daniel Houlihan, Ph.D.

Professor & Director | CESR
daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu
(507) 389-6278

Jacob Wessels

Research Consultant | CESR
jacob.wessels@mnsu.edu
(563) 451-9358

Abbey Riese

Research Consultant | CESR
abbey.linderholm@mnsu.edu
(507) 389-1093

Erik Jacobson

Research Consultant | CESR
erik.jacobson@mnsu.edu
(507) 389-1093

Website: mnsu.edu/cesr

The Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research (CESR) is a research consulting service housed within Minnesota State University, Mankato. CESR, comprised of faculty and graduate students, seeks to help advance the careers of faculty, staff, and graduate students. CESR offers a wide range of services to both faculty and students including manuscript editing, research design, and data analysis.

Table of Contents

Faculty Survey Responses

Q22: What has worked well (or better than expected) for you so far in your teaching during Fall 2020?

Theme 1 – Technology

"My understanding of D2L has allowed me to provide a good platform for students to learn and comprehend the concepts."

Summary

Overall, faculty found that their use of technology gave them more control over their teaching and several of the different software, websites, and specific features introduced have allowed them to effectively carry out their teaching in an online format. In addition, many professors felt well supported over the summer and during the Fall semester, specifically highlighting Instructional design and IT Solutions as useful resources for technology related issues. Specific technology cited as working well include D2L (i.e. chat feature, transparency of grading), Zoom (i.e. breakout rooms, recording feature), Simulation software (i.e. Flipgrid), and Kaltura (i.e. video demonstrations). However, some individuals revealed a major challenge with technology, specifically citing classrooms not outfitted with technology and not enough training over the summer to prepare for changes.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- D2L individual consultation was excellent.
- It has been rough. Classrooms not ready.
- Using simulation software for students to demonstrate their learning in 3 min videos on flipgrid where they narrate their solution and explain it.
- Microsoft Teams has worked well. The use of channels and private channels is a nice feature.
- Zoom has actually worked rather well for my class format
- Breakout rooms on Zoom for small group discussions.
- Assignments with directions in D2L.
- Instructional design specialists have been available for drop-ins and have resolved most of my issues quickly. IT Solutions has been available and have resolved most of my issues.
- I have gotten the hang uf using Zoom pretty quickly, and can start meetings with little effort now.
- The recording system has met the needs of my students who had schedule conflicts.
- Zoom has worked well. Recording lectures on Kaltura has worked well.

Theme 2 – Delivery

"After 4 weeks, all my students stopped attending in-person and chose to attend synchronously through Zoom. The best thing for me is no longer having to simultaneously accommodate two delivery modes at once. "

Summary

Faculty reported that moving their classes to an all online format has gone better than expected. Many professors revealed that students stopped attending lectures in person after a few weeks and that the switch to an entirely virtual format was better than attempting to deliver class content through two mediums. However, some faculty believe FlexSync is working, and some advocate for its use even when COVID-19 ends. Overall, the flexibility that Zoom and other technological resources provide was cited as better than expected outcome so far this semester.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- Moving my flex sync class to full online learning.
- Teaching my upper level class as a flipped class (online asynchronous lectures with face to face discussion) has worked very well so far.
- FlexSync has worked better than expected. I think it has potential to be useful after COVID-19.
- Synchronous sessions - much better, since I have all the necessary equipment
- Zoom. I have given synchronous lectures each week, even though that is not usually my teaching style, and my students say the class is going well so far.
- The flexibility of online classrooms
- Clear communication between students and me and among students during class meetings and office hours. This is helping everyone comfortable in their work/learning environments.
- moving classes completely on-line
- Online synchronous discussions via Zoom have been more inclusive than my FlexSync course discussions.

Theme 3 – Students

"Our students have really stepped up and been extremely flexible. Have to admit, I expected and anticipated that they would be. They're awesome."

Summary

Faculty consistently cite students as something that has gone better than expected this early on in the semester. Many professors were surprised at the level of engagement students still showed in their classes and were impressed at students' adaptability to learn in an online setting. Others wish that students would be more physically present (i.e. turning on their cameras or showing up to lectures in-real-time). However, the majority of faculty appreciate the great attitudes students show throughout this challenging period.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- Students attending by Zoom speak up a little more than I figured they would, and that's made for surprisingly rich discussions.
- to keep students engaged and coming to the class
- Students' willingness to connect remotely (Attendance) Keep up with normal development in the course Test taking
- I have students at Health Commons at Pond. They have been cognizant of proper COVID-19 protocols and eager to learn.
- Students have been able to retrieve and submit work online better than expected
- My students have great attitudes about this. I know many of them are overwhelmed (especially first year students) but generally, they are very understanding and try to be positive.
- I have appreciated the space to be flexible. My students have adapted really well to online learning. My busy Doctoral student love it as they tend to live away from Mankato and work full-time.
- Synchronous zoom lectures are going better than expected, but students showing up face to face has been a at a minimum

Q23: What kind of student engagement strategies are you using in your courses this semester?

Theme 1 – Discussions/Break out rooms

"Calling on students in Zoom to answer questions, or asking them to type responses in the chat. Using the Poll in Zoom. Asking them to contribute their thoughts. Having them participate in Discussion forums on D2L."

Summary

The wide majority of responses included some form of discussion as the primary student engagement strategy this semester. Many professors highlight the use of Zoom's ability for break out rooms allowing for better small group discussion. Other professors were surprised by Zoom's ability to handle large lectures and discussions with multiple students. Overall, discussions over class content was cited by almost every meaningful response.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- Discussion boards; Zoom meetings
- some polls, breakout rooms in which I go in and round on the groups, require them to acknowledge when speaking, chats
- Lots of polls and breakout rooms for group discussion.
- Labs and discussions during lecture
- For FlexSync courses, I am trying to use breakout rooms
- Small group discussions
- Class discussion mostly.
- Discussion Forums
- in-person discussions, online discussions
- My classroom is a flipped model where students learn prior to class and I check their class progress on D2L to see if they've completed the materials. Then we only do discussion based learning in class vs. lecturing.
- break out rooms. Getting them to answer questions.
- Zoom weekly individual touch base meetings with DNP students in my cohort. Discussions, etc
- Readings. Discussions. Online discussions

Theme 2 – Other/Miscellaneous

"Students have a "Choose Your Own Adventure" where for two weeks, I have 10-12 individual "mini sessions" prepared, each with a different specialization within our profession. Students can choose four of these topics to explore, depending on their interests and career ambitions. So far, this has been very well recieved by students because they feel the material is relevant to their goals, but still provides a foundational education in the profession."

Summary

This particular question only contained one apparent, over-arching theme associated with it (i.e. discussions). In general, faculty responding to this question over a wide variety of tools, resources, techniques, and learning formats that they use to keep learners engaged. Some professors mention features within D2L (i.e. chat) while others use a shared document that allows students to share their thoughts in-real-time. In terms of techniques, some faculty advocate for project-based work or brain storming activities. On the creative side, individuals outline learning formats that involve "choose your own adventure" learning or game-based learning like Bingo. Overall, many faculty expressed interest in learning more about other effective and creative methods to improve student engagement during this critical period.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- slack, flipgrid, and now I m using Spaced learning techniques.
- Chat feature in D2L, reactions to student submitted information
- I am using Revel which is a web-based learning platform that makes students interact with the material to help supplement the lectures.
- case studies, student presentations
- projects and zoom classes
- We have in person labs; so for me, that is where a lot of the engagement comes in.
- Written lecture "essays." Synchronous lectures. Guest speakers (with Zoom I can bring them in from around the world). Reflection essays. I'm trying everything and anything I can
- shared slide decks, padlet, Microsoft apps - word & ppt, I'd like to learn more.
- Small group activities while meeting synchronously, Kahoot!, BINGO
- I have a number of engagement strategies embedded in my courses - brainstorming is a big one I use, student group learning, flipped and project based work, and group writing projects
- breakout rooms & shared docs
- I'm producing very short technique videos. I also using a point grading system.
- Games, humor, breakout rooms (randomly assigned so they meet new people), Zoom Reactions

Q24: Is there anything else you would like us to know as we continue to support faculty through the Fall 2020 semester?

Theme 1 – Concerns with FlexSync

"Flexsync is difficult. It is challenging enough to keep students engaged when they are in a classroom. When they are split this is much more difficult and many online are just logging in and busy doing something else. I can not spend all of my time keeping people engaged while answering questions and demonstrating processes."

Summary

Similar to the concerns listed in the Summer needs assessment, faculty are finding it extremely difficult to teach using a FlexSync format. Many cite a general lack of students physically attending their classes, yet there is a very small amount who still attend this way. This caused a large amount of extra work for faculty, as the majority of their day is spent reworking lessons and lectures in a digital format when they already gave the lecture in person. Some professors are calling for effectiveness metrics that support the continued use of FlexSync and many express feeling burnout due the toll it is taking on their daily living experiences.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- Like a lot of other faculty, I put in a lot of time and energy I frankly didn't have (and didn't get paid for) over the summer to adapt my classes for the FlexSync format. I read as much as I could find and spent weeks reworking my classes, assignments, activities, etc., all on the assumption that I would be teaching three FlexSync classes. And I am. But it turns out that for all intents and purposes, they're just online-synchronous classes. That's because, with only a few exceptions, all of my students just attend via Zoom, even when they have the option of being in the classroom -- and despite the fact that all of them reported wanting to attending in-person on the survey I sent them before the term began. They showed up during Week 1, but their numbers slowly dwindled. Now, I have maybe 7-10 students (out of well over 100) attend in-person per class meeting. And I know I'm not alone. In fact, every single faculty member I've spoken with who is teaching FlexSync this semester reports having the same issue. So, I don't think it has to do with the way I'm teaching. It's the format itself. And why would I dedicate so much time and energy to making this hybrid format work when it is barely hybrid at all? When only a few students are actually in the classroom? I could make students attend, but that defeats the point of the format, no? And moreover, that seems inappropriate given the ongoing pandemic.

- The students are not necessarily showing up to the classroom for flexsync. I have a classroom with a pandemic capacity of 14, and I regularly have 2 to 4 students show up for class even though I spent A LOT of time at the beginning of the semester surveying their desires and creating a schedule to help fit students in the classroom if they want to be there. I'm not against flexsync, and it's working very well in one of my classes even if the students are not in the classroom. The other class, however, students are not in the classroom and they are not using cameras so I honestly don't know who is engaged and who is not. I think finding a system where professors don't spend SO MUCH TIME creating a schedule of classroom attendance at the start of the semester for Spring when the schedule will largely be ignored is a great idea. I know I'm not going to spend my time doing that in the Spring, but I will need an alternative for identify who can and cannot be in the classroom if we continue using flexsync.
- I would just stress that the amount of time it is taking to teach these classes has more then doubled and not once have I felt like anyone down there has really acknowledged that. We just get "here are some more tools for you to use. Go learn them".
- I need to know about the usefulness of the FlexSync model as a general strategy university-wide
- I'm spending more time teaching than normal - I'm doing double the work for my upper level course (doing the same discussion twice per week and pre-recording lectures). For all my classes, I'm spending far more time writing announcements on D2L, setting up online assignments and due dates, etc. On top of all this, I have to adapt and develop new material for this new way of delivering my courses. This is taking a toll by giving me less time to do all the other aspects of my job (research, advising, mentoring, etc.)
- Though I appreciate the efforts done with the zoom flex syncs classrooms, technology fails almost every class and is very frustrating and I usually end up just using my laptop and disconnect from the classroom camera set up. Also, I usually only ever have 1-3 students actually showing up to campus since it is an option. Not really worth it in my opinion if only 1-3 will show up each class.
- I know it is not practical, but not being able to see students when teaching flexsync takes a lot away from the ability to read the students and reduces effectiveness in the classroom.
- I don't know if anyone understands the additional time and effort it takes to teach in an online format. I'm working a ridiculous number of ours and I'm very concerned about getting burned out.
- FlexSync in large enrollment classes is extremely difficult and I am a skilled teacher or large classes. Focused guidance for addressing this unique problem is needed. Thank you.
- FlexSync is not working for my classes; the division between students in class and on Zoom makes human conversation—where a thread from one student is followed through on by another—extremely difficult.

Theme 2 – Support

"Check in with the faculty too - while we are very good at being student centered, this should not be at the expense of faculty and staff. I see many low energy/burnt out colleagues around me who are stepping up in big ways, but this comes at a price on their end as well. "

Summary

In relation to the previous theme, many professors feel underappreciated for the amount of work they do for adapting their classes to FlexSync. Some faculty would appreciate someone checking in on them to see how they are doing, while others want people to understand the amount of stress they are under this semester. In addition, some professors call for more resources to be available to help them with their technology concerns. Technecial support overall was viewed positively and many would like less time-consuming ways to receive the support available to them.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- No one bought us chili, lunch or ice cream this year. It's not about the food, not at all, but there hasn't been an acknowledgement of hard work by SOME individuals to make this all work. Good thing for students, as it isn't MSU that is winning my heart....even though MSU is better than most.
- Just be aware that there is a level of stress that is effecting people in different ways.
- What are some tips on how to structure an online course on D2L, to make things as clear as possible for the students? Are there some example D2L courses we could view? I try my best to make things, especially deadlines, as clear as possible, but I wonder how other instructors deal with this.
- Please continue to provide instructional design resources and D2L support.
- I appreciate CETLs efforts, there are many resources available but I just don't have time. Can you do a "Zoom tip of week" about a feature we might not know? Or same for D2L? Something quick and easy and easily deleteable, if needed.
- Have more D2L support options, such as weekend and evening availability.
- I'd like to see the resources organized in a central repository where I can do a keyword search for the tip or tutorial that I am looking for. Right now you have to do some clicking around to find things. As a program director, I'd like an adjunct teaching handbook that has quick start guides for things that I could give to adjuncts instead of having to piece together my own stuff for them. It would be good for GA's who are TA's or student teaching.

Theme 3 – Concerns with COVID

"Having little notice about changes to polices is worse than even restrictive polices. It is hard to teach effectively when it is impossible to make certain plans. "

Summary

A select number of faculty mentioned concerns with COVID and policies associated with it. Some professors find the policies vague and call for more accountability from faculty to uphold certain policies. Others find the numbers related to COVID cases not to be reflective of what is actually occurring on campus. While a this is a smaller theme, it appeared that professors find the policies rather restrictive for their teaching plans, and others still do not feel safe teaching in a traditional format.

Selected Quotes form Survey

- Keep us up to date regarding the truth about our Covid numbers. Provide more protection for students living in dorms. Many of my students have informed me that they have tested positive for Covid or were exposed to a room-mate who tested positive. We were told the students would have single dorm rooms. We were also told we would have classroom support for Zoom, but none of that actually happened.
- Didn't get much support from the university in decision making on how to regulate/enforce pandemic related issues.
- There is too much focus on "what students want" rather than finding the best way to provide quality education during this time. Also we need a more comprehensive policy/procedure for dealing with all the students who are in quarantine or isolation. The statistics provided by the university DO NOT reflect what we are seeing in the classroom. One section (20 students) for a large enrollment class (nearly 600) has 14 people with either Covid or are in quarantine due to exposure another has 18 of 24 students in quarantine or isolation. The numbers of students who are indicating that they are unable to come to campus for the F2F experiences we are providing is high and which individuals are affected is constantly changing which makes it extremely difficult to provide quality and rigorous experiences.
- Vague guidance for handling COVID - some clarification for how to best manage without overextending our classes. More support for faculty trying to uphold policies and keeping students accountable.

Student Survey Responses

Q21: What other suggestions do you have for online course delivery at Minnesota State, Mankato?

Theme 1 – Consistency

"Please maybe set a structure that all professors are recommended to follow so students do not have to hop around to 10 different websites for every single class! It can get very confusing."

Summary

Overall, many students found courses this semester to vary from instructor to instructor. While this is the case most years, the added navigational pains associated with online learning environments appeared to add additional stress to students. Suggestions vary across this theme, but many students advocate for instructors to either record their lectures or to pre-record their lectures and make these videos available to view outside of class. Some students revealed that content is harder to comprehend over Zoom calls and that recording the lectures would aid in their learning experience.

Another common suggestion related to consistency in course structure and delivery. Many students advocate for all instructors to use D2L or some common Learning Management System where it is easy to navigate all of their required materials. Some students cite having classes force them to make subscriptions and use websites that differ from instructor to instructor, causing confusion and a sense of being over-whelmed. In regard to delivery, many students found courses to lack engagement and advocate for all instructors to have some form of real-time discussion of content. Some students find a FlexSync/hybrid delivery catering to either online or in-person students, causing either one of the groups to be educationally under-served.

Selected Quotes from Survey – Recorded Lectures

- POSTING LECTURES!!! sometimes it is hard to get all of the notes and having to ask my professor to go back is an inconvenience. Thank you!
- To make the lecture videos the same amount of time a normal class period would be if we were in person
- I strongly feel that every professor should be recording lectures in some aspect. Whether that be pre-recording or recording during zoom. Myself and many other students often get kicked out of zoom and miss information. I know doing something like this may cause students to skip class, but there can be guidelines around it because this semester needs to have some exceptions.

- It would be very helpful if all teachers recorded the lesson and posted them on d2l. And for all professors to use d2l and not their own website.
- Prerecorded videos so then it doesn't prevent class progress from technology errors
- I am struggling to understand the content on live zoom sessions because my professors move too fast. I would really appreciate pre-recorded lectures with supplementary pre-made notes so we can actually follow along instead of getting lost within the first 5 minutes trying to figure out what my professors talking about and how they figured the answer.
- Classes should be recorded because now professors have that ability
- Have the professors actually use pre-recorded videos that aren't from years ago. Have the professors actually reach out and make sure we are understanding the material. I have a professor for two classes that uses videos from past years and never engages with us and if I don't personally message him he won't post any assignments ahead of time.

Selected Quotes from Survey – Course Structure

- Teachers must be required to update their syllabuses to the new online version of this course; it is not appropriate to have a syllabus that refer to the course when it is face to face.
- Better time management for zooms and lectures.
- All teachers are on the same page and use the same way of teaching not all over the place because it makes it very difficult for students to remember every single little thing different in each class(gets exhausting, and teachers aren't understanding)
- Honestly, I feel like the biggest problem is the way instructors handle their courses. I know that they are making due with a crappy situation, but it is almost unbearable as a student. They are hard to understand, go off on tangents, seem unorganized, and when they use whiteboards in person, they can almost never get the camera set right for students to see the content properly. Not only that, but attending the virtual lectures almost feels like a waste of time due to the reasons mentioned above. In my opinion, if we are doing virtual lectures, prerecorded asynchronous videos are the way to go, or, if the instructor can at least acknowledge their short comings in being able to lecture online, being able to point to a video that will provide the best knowledge (khan academy, youtube videos, etc). I can't tell you how many students have told me that they don't even bother showing up to lectures anymore, because it simply isn't worth their time. This is also kind of unrelated, but I feel like the quality of professors has diminished as well. A simple look at RateMyProfessors.com for a lot of the STEM professors paints a pretty clear picture. Students are missing out on fundamental properties of a course, and not having that foundation early on will only lead to a collapse later down the road. Even with the ability to check into professor "reviews" online, it doesn't really change anything, as they are often the only option for us as students. We can either take it with them, or have a huge setback in terms of graduating on time.
- More consistency on how the teachers communicate and teach via zoom
- D2L calendar with everything that is due as well as zoom meeting. This would be major beneficial as the due dates and staying up to dated is one of the hardest things to keep up with when everything is online. This would put students on track, or even if there was a way to check off notifications so we know what we've done or have left. We only get

notifications when something is put up or when it is about to be due, if there was a calendar with everything we'd be able to check off upcoming tasks!

- Every student is basically teaching themselves the material. The online lectures aren't very helpful given the lack of knowledge of the the professors with the technology, distractions, etc. I have 1 professor managing to actually teach content while my other 3 courses I am teaching myself from textbooks.
- I know that some instructors don't have the resources on D2l to teach the class, so they have to go through different website other than d2l, such as Cengage, Webassign, or Wiley Plus. And sometimes it gets really difficult trying to get all of the content we are supposed to learn through 3 different websites. I understand that it's just the reality for some classes, but maybe if there was a way to get all of the information on one website, so I don't have to hop from website to website to try and find everything I need to do, because I feel like I have everything done and then I forget to go and check the other websites and then I'm scrambling to get everything done. I know I have to do better on my part, but that's just a little thing that would make my life and probably a lot of other student's lives, a whole lot easier.
- More layout uniformity to make it easier to navigate from one professor to another professor
- The biggest issue is that I feel like I am constantly playing "whack a mole". I did a very heavy load of summer classes because I had to switch my major and at no point felt like I do now. My teachers assign things differently and their due dates aren't always clear. Some do a very good job of laying out how things will go but others just try to act like they are teaching a normal class through zoom.
- I would prefer if each of my professors made checklists each week. they are very helpful.

Selected Quotes from Survey – Course Delivery

- Zoom classes could be more interactive so professors don't feel like they are talking to themselves.
- I think all professors should offer zoom sessions for their students, even if it is an online course. All of mine are online due to COVID-19 and only three of my five professors offer zoom sessions other than office hours. They should have to set aside time during the week where all students can log on and either have lecture or discussions or open question time.
- Teachers must be required to have some sort of engagement with the class. Teachers must be required to update their syllabuses to the new online version of this course; it is not appropriate to have a syllabus that refer to the course when it is face to face.
- Much of the course content and communication is clear, but I have suggestions to enhance course delivery. For one, I believe professors could enhance accessibility. The idea of regular virtual office hours would make accessibility to professors easier rather than students sending a request and waiting for a response. Moreover, I believe it would strengthen online student ties to the campus, department, and professors if at least one "live" Zoom/Google Meet is required in each course for students to receive individualized feedback.

- Live Zoom - use the full class time!
- More interaction among students in all-online courses especially, especially in courses that lend themselves to discussion. As it is, in most of the all-online classes I've had this semester and last one (since the transition) the other students might as well not exist.
- Making professors have lectures. Enforce a rule to ensure they are producing lectures.
- live discussion with instructors where we can ask difficult questions about the world and hear their educated perspective tailored to us. Less conventional education that is more applicable to the real world. Make it cheaper and spend less on the physical aspect of campus. Watching documentaries is cool homework for me because Textbooks make me fall asleep, yet a film can show so much more because there are music words, and visuals. Self directed learning exploring jobs in our major fields would help give us a clearer focus and reason when we study. I feel I could learn better skills that way for life.
- Require instructors to meet face-to-face on Zoom at least a few times a semester. Courses that are delivered 100% online with no interaction whatsoever with the instructor or classmates are not engaging and not the quality of education we want/are paying for.
- Obligate professors to actually teach us, instead of just posting readings on D2L, I could read a textbook on my own, I am paying money to be taught.
- Make sure courses are not just automated, meaning make sure an instructor is actually sending lectures and engaging with students. Makes me feel as though y'all just want my money to teach myself. Kind of disrespectful to me as a student.
- Try interactive elements during zoom calls to engage students (maybe things like menti or kahoots); very clear objectives for the time spent in zoom (agenda) if it will not be simply lecture. Use of D2L for grades on assignments (in the grades feature, not as a spreadsheet). Timely feedback on assignments

Theme 2 – Communication

"When the professor of a class that doesn't have zooms, I would like to see the professor send out announcements when due dates are. It can be easy to forget about a class that doesn't have zooms or class time."

Summary

It is clear from responses that students desire instructors to improve on their communication in their courses. These suggested improvements were centered around better response time for emails, more notifications when assignments or content are posted on D2L, and similar to the theme above, some form of consistent, in-time communication of course content. In addition, some students found that forced participation in an online setting is often awkward and not beneficially to their learning. It can be determined that students have a desire to learn, but poor communication in these presented situations interferes with their ability to learn.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- Be clear on what the assignments are covering. Half the time I don't know what to study.
- I would appreciate it if teachers would tell us when they post things on d2l because I don't know where to find some of the course materials and it takes me 20mins sometimes to find what I'm looking for
- For the professors to actually take advice/criticism and implement it instead of just blowing it off. Also for the profs to send out some reminders for work or even if D2L sent our some that would be far better.
- The main thing I would suggest is for teachers to be clear on what assignments are due each week and having clear instructions since we don't have the in person access we used to have in class, especially when course aren't on zoom and are completely online. It's hard to keep up with when what assignments, quizzes, discussion post, readings, and papers are due while also trying to work a job and deal with personal things as well.
- I need my professors and my advisor to be responsive to my emails.
- Some of my professors haven't even emailed me back in over a week on questions I have about the material. I don't know what they're doing but it's not "teaching." I'm very disappointed with how this semester is going. I wish I wouldn't have enrolled. It would be helpful for every instructor to check in at least once a week (like a normal class) to ensure everyone's on the same page and answer questions. It's hard to learn the material with just a book and a few power point slides and no direction. I know you shouldn't micromanage your professors but some simply aren't doing their job.
- Don't make students talk, it's very awkward, uncomfortable, and difficult to do so on zoom

- Add lectures or weekly updates from professors for classes that only utilize the textbook for learning and are primarily online. Hearing from the instructor would greatly benefit students in helping them understand what is expected of them and keep track of when things are due.
- Communication board for students and faculty within class. Some sort of meet and great (could even be online) but connections should be made between students
- I have no problems with the planning and education I am receiving on campus currently, I did 2 years of college remotely while working 2 jobs, my biggest problem is just communication and learning with a couple of the foreign/Thick accented professors teaching classes and I have a hard time following new content, let alone figuring out what they had said prior. I would like to have teachers that I can understand or that give more resources for better understanding if there is a language barrier problem. :)
- Find a way to reach out to professors about errors in their work better. One of my professor has had a lot of mathematical and grammar errors since moving his course completely online.
- I think my only suggestion would to make sure our teachers are able to access their emails a few times a day so us students can reach them with questions we have.
- Try interactive elements during zoom calls to engage students (maybe things like menti or kahoots); very clear objectives for the time spent in zoom (agenda) if it will not be simply lecture. Use of D2L for grades on assignments (in the grades feature, not as a spreadsheet). Timely feedback on assignments.
- Teachers on their email more
- Tell the teachers to respond to their students. Grad students are the only ones capable of running a class online from what I have experienced so far.
- I would like to see professors to post or send emails about the assignments that are due for the week/month. Rather than one big calendar. It's easy to miss assignments in the D2L layout with all the tabs.
- Have all professors use D2L as a uniform communication method. Some professors try to communicate assignments over email and it's really difficult to keep track of. When it's on D2L you can see what material is uploaded, what assignments are due, etc. If professors communicate only over email, it gets very messy trying to go back and find every email about each assignment. Some professors do this for all assignments and class material; it's very unhelpful.
- Give all of your instructors a headset with mic. Them using a computer microphone is extremely distracting, and it makes it difficult at times to understand what they are saying. This is an unacceptable oversight from the university.

Theme 3 – Flexibility/Additional Workload

"**More asynchronous content as students want flexibility on when they want to work on homework. **"

Summary

Many students revealed that they are struggling with having an online learning with very strict and often inflexible procedures and due dates. Some students cite a desire to have virtual textbooks to aid with their learning experience, while others found procedures like "logging in to a course to track time" to be very restrictive of their time. In general, given the increased amount of distractions associated with online/at-home learning (i.e. other family members, responsibilities, etc.), many students advocate for more time on quizzes or assignments to improve flexibility with their daily lives outside of the learning environment.

In relation to flexibility is the general sense of additional workload perpetuated by instructors interfering with other life aspects of students. It was very common for students to cite increased assignments and readings that would occur outside of scheduled lecture that many instructors use as a supplement or replacement to traditional lecture. The result involved students believing their instructors to be lazy and the additional workload has left many feeling that they must teach themselves the content. In addition, students claiming to be in large class sizes with this situation revealed that the feedback they received from assignment has been poor and not useful, which they believe is a result of instructors having too many assignments to grade and review. It is clear that while pre-recorded lectures were advocated for in a previous theme, it appears that students found that courses with content only in this fashion has become an additional burden to their workload.

Selected Quotes form Survey – Flexibility

- more asynchronous content as students want flexibility on when they want to work on homework.
- Much of the course content and communication is clear, but I have suggestions to enhance course delivery. For one, I believe professors could enhance accessibility. The idea of regular virtual office hours would make accessibility to professors easier rather than students sending a request and waiting for a response. Moreover, I believe it would strengthen online student ties to the campus, department, and professors if at least one "live" Zoom/Google Meet is required in each course for students to receive individualized feedback.
- Online classes should be easy and not stressful. Many students do not enjoy Zoom. Sitting at home in your bed listening to a zoom lecture makes you want to go to sleep. Keeping online classes simple by using only D2L and having homework due the same day every week and a

test and exam here and there is good and easy for students to pay attention too. Since students are online and not going to campus make it easier on them. For example the MindTap website is ridiculous. If we already are signed into D2L and all the resources needed for a class are on D2L just use D2L. Their is no reason for a Professor to have all of their content on MindTap and not use D2L except to state when homework is due on MindTap. Its confusing and making class more difficult than it needs to be.

- More time for us students to do our assignments .
- Timed tests/ quizzes are not helpful
- professors need to be flexible with our time as well as us with theirs what they're used to doesn't work anymore we are not getting the education we deserve for what we are paying for
- Sign Language is really hard over zoom. Maybe have pre-recorded lectures that students can watch and then have the professor accessible during certain hours if students have questions or would like extra help. It's hard to figure out what the professor is signing when you can barley see her through zoom. Otherwise, online classes are going well and professors are doing a great job reaching out and helping.
- I want to be able to have the textbook digital copies since I am far, I will like to be advice or help in some student activities that I choose, and I want to be assist in choosing an on campus Job, and I want to be assist in choosing an on campus room.
- Students who come into class once a week should, regardless of assignment due date, but allowed to submit homework online. The requirement of printed homework assignments is ridiculous during a pandemic.
- Give us more time to do exams and be lenient on grading.
- When doing classes "online" even if it's online due to covid, it makes no sense to require students to log in during class times. The outside world is not the same as being in class. There are other distractions, and while that class time may work for someone to be in school, it may not work for them while they are learning from home. There are many other factors that come into home learning than just sitting down at the computer and listening to a lecture, or taking a test at the same time as everyone else. I personally have kids, and a family, so when I have to sit down at 10 am to listen to a class or take a test during that time, it's extremely difficult because my kids are also home, and they are very young. It's not as easy to focus when I am at home as to when I can leave the house to be in the classroom, so it should be able to be done on my time when it is distraction free in my house.

Selected Quotes from Survey – Additional Workload

- Switching in-class time to additional assignments, readings, and discussions often demands far more time dedication than an actual class period. Assignments and discussions should be streamlined to mitigate this time consumption. Excesses of synchronous group projects and meetings have also make scheduling time consuming, tedious, takes away from our classwork, and when coinciding with an asynchronous class they can directly conflict with our class schedules. Classes should avoid having multiple synchronous study, discussion,

reading, and project groups; it's simply too much to track and accomplish without spending massive amounts of time.

- I have had several professors who have added additional assignments/ lectures/ readings because we "aren't meeting in person". These things take up extra time I really don't have while I'm still expected to spend the same amount of time on homework and in class lessons.
- Too many assignments, I prefer projects that give us a lot of time to work on, or exams with study guides that give us a lot of time to study.
- Every student is basically teaching themselves the material. The online lectures aren't very helpful given the lack of knowledge of the the professors with the technology, distractions, etc. I have 1 professor managing to actually teach content while my other 3 courses I am teaching myself from textbooks.
- Teachers don't respect the credit hour limit, and often go over the class time in the movies, and on zoom lectures. Or expect that we are keeping up to date on everything they post constantly. Sometimes having to check d2l up to 5 times a day, just in case
- It would be nice for professors to have live lectures on zoom during scheduled class time, instead of having pre-recorded lectures and additional discussion during the scheduled class zoom time. This creates a larger time conflict with other classes and time for homework/listening to pre-recorded lectures.
- Stop being online. I am not learning anything. And I am wasting my money and time. Professors are being absolutely ridiculous with assignments and expectations.
- Pre-recorded lectures should not be happening. If I give a class an allotted time each week, that is the professors time to instruct and lecture. Lectures should not be expected to be watched outside of class time. I have 7 classes and work and do not have time to watch lectures outside of class.
- Switch from pre-recorded lectures to live zooms. I am learning nothing from specific professors due to their videos being from years ago. I am basically teaching myself 15 credits.
- Professors need to recognize that students have to double the amount of time needed for each class when it's online so professors shouldn't require so much work on the students because we have other classes to do.
- I feel that online courses have turned into more of a flipped class room where we aren't learning much in the class room and there is a lot more work to be done outside the class which makes students feel like they are always sitting on the computer doing homework.
- Some professors give too much homework to make up for it being online
- It seems education this semester has been very assignment-skewed. As a result, I and many students I have talked to feel that we must simply learn how to complete the assignments, as opposed to learning the content. I feel we have too many assignments to complete and not enough time to do so, so I feel like my actual academic growth is very stunted.

Q22: What other challenges did you experience during Fall 2020?

Theme 1 – Motivation and Mental Health

"Staying motivated has been harder with more things being online."

Summary

Motivation was overwhelmingly the most cited challenge students are experiencing during the Fall semester. Many students directly find the online learning format to be the stem of this lack of motivation, with many distractions in their homes impacting their ability to focus and concentrate. In addition, the online learning environment offers very little interaction with other students, resulting in many students feeling isolated and less engaged, impacting their motivation. Others feel a sense of helplessness when their courses are entirely asynchronous, feeling they must teach themselves the content. Some students find the additional learning curve of navigating numerous online learning sites to be tedious and sometimes overwhelming, decreasing their motivation.

In a similar vein, the constate threat due to COVID and the lack of motivation felt in classes has negatively impacted some student's metal health during the Fall semester. Many students see others not adhering to health guidelines and feel an increased amount of stress and anxiety due to these concerns.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- I find it challenging to stay motivated for online learning especially when its troublesome or confusing to navigate D2L or other learning sites. I wish there was a baseline on how teachers constructed online classes (at least through D2L, and if there already is, I'm unaware of it as my classes seemingly all take different approaches to it) and I wish there was a mini-guide to the set up of D2L. This might just be me, but I genuinely had no idea how to navigate D2L when it first opened, and it was troublesome to re-learn how to navigate the site for each of my classes. I understand that this might just have to be how it is but it was just frustrating to feel like your running in circles on your first day of class. However, I understand that my teachers aren't to blame for this confusion and that some might just be having the same troubles I am with the navigation.
- It's very hard to stay motivated to, in many cases, teach yourself content that you are paying thousands of dollars to have someone else teach you. It is difficult to teach yourself something that you know next to nothing about compared to a professor who likely has

mastered the content. When there are no video lectures and next to no help from professors it makes me question why I even pay to take these courses.

- FINDING motivation and the big amounts of time to do everything and also just STAYING MOTIVATED!!! These are sooooo difficult to do at home on your own when you could be doing so many other things or you just dont have the time in the huge chunks that assignments or readings call for
- Staying motivated. I don't know what's going to be on my quizzes in some classes. I will not be taking classes next semester if it's like this again.
- Staying motivated was challenging. It feels weird having basically no interaction with the professor and just completing assignments.
- Staying motivated is definitely one of the harder things that I have to accomplish on an everyday basis
- Staying motivated is very hard because i fee disconnected from other people in the class and professors.
- Motivation is very difficult when you know that you have to keep re-watching lectures due to not understanding. Completing assignments then gets harder to do because of the lack of motivation due to not understanding and time to complete.
- Staying motivated living on campus is more depressing than living in a military base (speaking from experience)
- It is a bit hard to stay motivated when a lot of stuff is online. I started one of my FlexSync classes online but found that it was very hard to pay attention. Only 2 students and the professor were in class for the first few weeks, so I decided I was comfortable enough with that to start going to campus on those days.
- Motivation and Mental Health has been negatively impacted due to the reduced in person attendance and lack of events. I understand this is something that is complicated to manage due to the epidemic.
- mental health was a huge barrier, as was physical health from bad mental health. that impacted everything from staying motivated to completing assignments
- Mental health and social aspects. Being a member of a "vulnerable population" is extremely isolating, particularly if you are not from the area.
- Professors not adhering to health mandates and creating an unsafe in-class environment
- I am worried about my health because there are students everywhere with various crowds and events going on around campus.
- Stay motivated! Online classes and the lack of moving really has a negative impact on my mental health after a while. I feel like I haven't accomplished anything when I am not moving, even if I technically had.
- So far, I've been studying a lot and experience days of really bad burn-out where I physically can't study any more. I wish I could pace myself more but it feels like the work is never ending which I guess that's what college is.

Theme 2 – Communication and Feedback

"Lack of communication, both with the instructor and other students. I feel like a number of issues I've had in all-online classes stem from the higher psychological barrier to sending an email to a professor versus just asking a question in class."

Summary

As stated previously in Q21, many students are struggling with communicating with their instructors and with each other. Many find their professors not giving timely feedback, which has impacted their desire to learn. Other students would appreciate if professors would reach out with more support messages and acknowledge the difficulties that students currently face. Many students advocate for a better notification system for their courses, as many miss deadlines or were unaware that particular content had been posted.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- the reliance on email also means that information gets siloed more. If a student asks a question via email, unless the instructor goes out of their way to include the whole class in the email, the only student to get an answer is the one who asked. In an in-person class, if a student asks a question, unless the instructor goes out of their way to make sure no one else can hear their answer, the entire class will hear the answer.
- Teacher are not getting feedback to students in a timely manner, and zoom meetings get to be very long at times.
- It is very difficult to understand what we are supposed to be doing each week when professors do not tell us. They need to step in to their roles that they took and help their students who are struggling.
- I feel that as classes are online professors need to make more of an effort to reach out to their students with weekly emails, and a checklist of assignments to complete that week because a lot of professors do not fill out the calendar on D2L and only refer to the syllabus
- I had trouble with some due dates for assignments - there was a lecture reflection for my communication class that I was unaware had been posted, and was unaware of the due date for as well, so more frequent communication with assignments and deadlines would be especially helpful.
- communication (unsure of what is going on in a few classes)
- Communication was lacking from several professors to a sufficient degree.
- I have struggled in one class with inconsistent communication and updates being posted randomly and sometimes almost halfway through the week instead of before the week starts like most of my other classes. It is much more helpful to have content added and hear from professors about the following week before the week actually starts (Sunday night)

because I easily lose motivation when I am unable to completely plan my week out ahead of time.

- Communication on deadlines and assignments from professors.
- communication slightly through email
- Struggled with communication with professor not being clear what they want done.
- Communication with certain professors are poor. With classes being online, communication needs to be better, not worse. One of my classes hasn't had one single lecture or video discussing what we need to accomplish each week. In this class, I am unsure about what I'm even supposed to be learning about which is very frustrating as this is one of my core GPA classes in order to get into the Nursing Program.
- I think the only struggle is communication since it is had to get an instant answer.
- I had many teachers take weeks to answer simple questions. One professor would call me right away and actually talk out my questions until I understood. It was the best teaching I have had online. I also didn't get grades or feedback, and much of my course work turned into due dates and grades as opposed to the few classes that focused more on reading and meaningful understand over assignments where I learned more and feel prepared.

Theme 3 – Time Management and Organization

"Being able to fit all the assignments for every class with all the lectures and zooms too within the due dates, which were usually the middle of the week."

Summary

In relation to the additional workload theme highlighted in Q21, many students cite struggling with managing their time and organizing their course work and materials. Many feel overwhelmed with the amount of work they need to do and balancing that with other life responsibilities right now has been difficult for some students. Others revealed difficulty with creating structure for themselves and an inability to keep to a consistent schedule. This combined with the concern for communication theme listed above and poor course organization has resulted in some poor performances from some students.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- Fall is going better than last spring so far, but I am seeing much more group work this semester, meaning I have to schedule time with many classmate's conflicting schedule, requiring many hours spread across several days to plan individual meetings. In classes with multiple groups/group projects this becomes very strenuous.
- A lack of time due to working full time and online classes full time. My environment with family makes it difficult to study or complete projects often having to rely on children's after bedtime hours.
- Time management between multiple activities plus school
- Keeping track of all my assignments and not accidentally missing the due date
- time management with all of the material for the courses. I felt as though everything was kind of dumped on me and I had to figure it out myself.
- Lack of structure
- Organization of material is a big one. This applies to both the lectures, as well as their organization of content for homework/studying.
- Organization, I wish all the Profs would have a syllabus that lists all the projects and their due dates for the entire semester- not all do. It helps me plan when I know everything to expect.
- Professor organization, completing assignments because of uncertainty and no guidance from the professors.
- I have ADD so organization is already an issue, and with instructors being inconsistent with how they distribute materials makes any organizational tools I have moot, and several instructors are not consistent in their own classes with how material is distributed.

Theme 4 – Technology and Control

"Just be flexible and give each other grace/understanding when technology malfunctions.

Summary

Many students stated that they experience technological issues in which they have little control over. Some students tell instances were spotty Wi-Fi impacted their ability to perform quizzes and received lower grades because of it. This created a sense of helplessness in the students, as they have little control for these interruptions, yet they still impact their performance. Others cited technology in the classroom as an inconvenience to their learning ability. Some students advocate for more teacher support programs that instruct their professors on more technical skills used for teaching with an online format. In addition, technology issues were related to health issues, with many students finding the constant staring into a screen and sitting down for long periods of the day negatively impacting their health.

Selected Quotes from Survey

- too much time on computer without breaks
- Technology problems have been common.
- Some professors not responding to email or having issues with technology.
- having to be on the computer all day,
- D2l submission and getting used to new software.
- frustrating when they do not understand technology since they had spring and summer to figure it out and school isn't cheap. The quality of online school isn't the same, I feel like I am not learning as much and its all self taught
- There is lots of homework everyday for each of my classes, finding the motivation to get through 8+ hours of sitting in front of a computer all day long is extremely hard.
- Communication with a professor who doesn't use D2L and doesn't like technology
- I think technology makes a simple task hard many times instead.
- Trying to keep up with technology is very difficult when each class is utilizing it differently and many professors seem to fairly impatient if students do not understand or have difficulty getting technology to work
- terrible help with technology
- Instructors have difficulty managing technology: microphones and speakers, zoom, etc. inconsistent course formats on d2l
- Eye pain from too much time on the computer