

Five Tips for Time Efficiency in the Culture of Active Learning

Personalized interactions and project-based activities are core active-learning concepts but grading and managing them quickly becomes time-intensive. Efficiently manage your teaching with your other obligations by using these tips.

1. Write Communications in Advance. Write course announcements, emails, and discussion board prompts ahead of time and use scheduling tools to time their release (Blackboard's *Adaptive Release*; Outlook's *Send Later*). Consider taking an hour or two and writing the weekly course announcements for the whole semester! Reuse these term-to-term with minor modifications as needed.

2. Keep Notes About Students. In large or online classes, it may be hard to remember nicknames, faces, or special circumstances. Quick notes in an easy-to-reference location can make the difference between student perception of a welcoming environment and an uncaring one.

3. Generic Due Dates in Typed Materials. Where possible, do not state calendar dates such as "August 15, 2019" or "Wednesday the 28th." Instead, make work due "at the beginning of each class" or "Thursdays at midnight." This minimizes updates to the syllabus, slides, Blackboard, assignment sheets, and anywhere else you might be tempted to write a date.

4. Create an Online F.A.Q. (Frequently Asked Questions). Instruct students to post questions there. (If they email you, respond indicating that they should post questions there.) Offer a small incentive to students who answer these questions. Schedule time biweekly to answer any unanswered questions. Copy the best Q&A to the next term (omit student information).

- Take it a step further: create a brief written or recorded resource explaining a difficult concept. Post it online. Reuse it each semester.

5. Use Rubrics or Checklists to Grade.

Rubrics assess quality of projects, papers, essays, presentations, and other authentic assessments. Checklists assess performance of steps and behaviors. Each assures that students are graded fairly. Feedback may be standard or personalized.

- Take it a step further: have students peer- or self-assess their work using the same rubric or checklist, PRIOR to the due date. This improves assignment quality and increases student success.

BONUS TIP: Keep a Calendar!

Everyone with multiple responsibilities should have a calendar, planner, or agenda:

The best planner is the one you'll use.

- UND uses Microsoft Outlook.
- Many online options (iCal, Google, others).
- Many analog varieties at office or craft stores.

Use it for more than just meetings!

- Label important dates and deadlines.
- Block off time to prepare and time to grade.
- Cross-check with other personal and professional responsibilities.

Make it a routine.

- Less chance of being late or rushing.
- Less chance of forgetting something important.

Interested in learning more? Reach out to SMHS Education Resources instructional designers (777-4272).