TEACHING TIPS
FOR STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING
Updated 7-7-20

It is each faculty member's responsibility to promote a positive learning environment in the classroom at Rio Hondo College (RHC). Below are some tips on teaching and promoting a positive and equitable learning environment.

- **GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS** – Community college students face many competing challenges in their lives and RHC is no exception – many students work part-time or full-time, some have kids, others have learning disabilities, and some have all of the above and more. Following are ways to get to know your students better:

  o **Review RHC's demographics** – Following is a link to RHC's Student Success Scorecard where you can learn about our college's student demographics as well as our retention and success rates: https://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=881

  o **Learn students' names** – Learning students' names is an important step to connect with them and promote a positive learning environment. This helps students know that you care about them and their success.

  o **Learn students' backgrounds** – You may want to consider doing a quick verbal or written survey to learn more about students in your class. Do they work and, if so, part-time or full-time? Are they full-time or part-time students? Why are they taking your class? What motivates them?

- **USE DIVERSE TEACHING TECHNIQUES –** Different students prefer learning in different ways. Some can learn from just a verbal lecture, others need visual stimulation added in, and yet others may prefer to "learn by doing" in addition to a lecture. In reality, it's important to use a variety of instructional methods to fully engage your students and meet their diverse learning needs, such as a combination of the below:

  o **Verbal –** Lecture to your students verbally, but make sure to engage students along the way.

  o **Visual –** Incorporate visuals such as PowerPoints, writing on whiteboards, passing out handouts, etc.

  o **Activities –** Take a few minutes to have students work on an exercise or activity that gets them to think critically and problem solve, either individually or in small groups.

  o **Discussion –** Engage students in large group discussions, small group discussions, paired discussions, etc. Discussion is especially important to help students actively engage in the learning process. There may even be some students in the room who are subject matter experts through their work experiences and can add valuable points to the lesson of the day.

  o **Technology –** Using technology in a course in thoughtful and relevant ways can help to further engage students. A common technology used is Canvas for online discussions. You can also use in-class apps such as Kahoot! where students text their answers to in-class trivia and see everyone's responses instantly on the projection screen. Another popular app is Remind, which allows faculty to send texts or in-app messages without having to share the faculty's phone number (texting fees may apply to students for Remind, so ensure that this is not a mandatory communication tool).

  o **Videos –** Introducing brief videos (e.g. 2-3 minutes) into your lecture can help to break up the monotony of a lesson and make your class more interesting by connecting the curriculum to real-world examples, such as news clips of companies or industry leaders.

  o **Walk around the room –** Rather than lecturing from the podium throughout a full lecture, walk around the room: side-to-side as well as front-to-back. This allows you to engage students up close throughout the room and also make sure they are paying attention (as opposed to being distracted by playing on their computers and mobile devices).

- **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION –** Below are some online articles with additional helpful tips on teaching:

  Six Things That Make College Teachers Successful
  https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/six-things-make-college-teachers-successful/

  10 Terrible Mistakes College Teachers Make
  http://collegeteachingtips.com/372/10-terrible-mistakes-college-teachers-make

  Techniques to Help Underprepared Students Learn More
  https://community.acue.org/blog/teaching-tips-underprepared-students-learn/

  Tips for New Teachers at Community Colleges
  https://www.chronicle.com/article/Tips-for-New-Teachers-at/48003

  10 Tips for Teaching Your First College Class
  http://higheredprofessor.com/2016/08/15/10-tips-teaching-first-college-class/

TEACHING TIPS – DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE)
FOR STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING
Updated 7-7-20

Below are tips on teaching online in Canvas in an equitable way and building a vibrant learning community.

HOME PAGE
The "Home" page (or tab) invites students to start the course. Some elements to include could be a course banner, welcome message, tips for preparing for the course, links to the course syllabus and modules, and contact information.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF
Consider personally introducing yourself to your class (e.g. on the Home tab) by writing 3 to 5 paragraphs about yourself, your education, career journey, and including a photo or video (with closed captioning).   Students enjoy getting to know their faculty, which often happens naturally in on-ground classes but can be difficult in online classes unless it's intentional. A welcome video would be even better and studies show it increases retention of students. You can even encourage your students to introduce themselves to the class and post a photo of themselves, too.

ORIENTATION / INTRODUCTORY ANNOUNCEMENT
Students should be welcomed and oriented to the course by or before the first day of class (e.g. in the Announcements or Home tab) to cover such topics as: how to navigate class, course expectations, contact information, etc.

SYLLABUS
You must provide students in your course with a syllabus. There is a Syllabus tab in Canvas, which is an ideal location to place it since it is easy for students to find and regularly reference, when needed.

WEEKLY MODULES OR "CHUNKS" OF COURSE CONTENT
Faculty should "chunk" their course content into weekly modules with effective due dates (e.g. weekly due dates) to provide a realistic pace of presentation. This encourages student success by keeping them engaged throughout the semester and limits their ability to postpone their studies until the end, which can set them up for failure. There is a Modules tab, which is an ideal place for weekly content such as PowerPoints, videos, articles, quizzes, discussions, etc.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS
You should be introducing your class content each week *in your own words*. This communication reminds students what is coming for the week and lets them know you are connected to the course and are there to support them. A minimum of two announcements per week is suggested, more if you are teaching a condensed course. In addition, you can share information on campus resources, an embedded counselor, campus events, industry events, etc.

LECTURE
There needs to be a central lecture where the instructor communicates the course content to students. For example, it can include a PowerPoint or a video (with closed captioning) of the instructor lecturing.

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT CONTACT
In addition to meaningful faculty-to-student contact, federal and state regulations mandate student-to-student contact in online classes to help them engage meaningfully with one another. This can include discussions, partner/group projects or assignments, and peer review. Online discussion is an especially important part of the learning process as it is a way for students to converse and share their thoughts on a particular topic, further building a class community.

EASE OF NAVIGATION
Online courses should be well organized and easy to navigate. There should be a logical flow to your postings.

ACCESSIBILITY
Your course must be accessible for disabled students who may be enrolled. Did you provide captions with any images or videos you used in the course? If you are using audio files, did you also provide a print transcript version? If you have any questions on how to make your course accessible to all students, please contact Magnus Bennette (Instructional High Tech Access Computer Lab Technician) in the DSPS office: 562.463.7648 / mbennette@riohondo.edu

USE DIVERSE TEACHING TECHNIQUES – Different students prefer learning in different ways. Many online students learn by reading a PowerPoint, some prefer the addition of videos, others learn by also doing exercises, and most likely learn best by doing a combination of all of the above and more. So, it's important to use a variety of instructional methods to address the diverse learning needs of your online students, such as a combination of the below:

- **PowerPoint –** A PowerPoint is a common starting point for an online lecture. Most publishers provide a packaged PowerPoint that can be used and customized further by faculty. You can also create your own.

- **Audio –** Some packaged PowerPoints have an audio/voiceover option that students can play while they watch the PowerPoint. You can also use online software such as Confer Zoom, Screencast-O-Matic or Camtasia to record your own voice over a PowerPoint, which further personalizes your lecture. You have the option of using both of these software in the Whisper Booth found in the Distance Education (DE) Lab (you can significantly reduce ambient and acoustic noise when doing your audio or video recordings using this equipment).

- **Videos –** You can provide videos of yourself introducing the week's module or videos of yourself lecturing on a topic. Similarly, you could also provide brief clips of videos that connect the curriculum to real-world examples, such as news clips of companies or industry leaders. Videos must include closed captioning.

- **Articles –** Diversify your lesson by including written articles that connect curriculum to real-world examples.

- **Exercises –** Incorporate engaging or critical thinking exercises into your lesson, e.g. as part of your PowerPoint/lecture or maybe as a standalone quiz or online exercise.

- **Discussion –** Hold an online discussion in Canvas. Open-ended prompts work best to get students to think critically. You can hold asynchronous discussions in Canvas or even real-time discussions via Zoom (a video-conferencing software available for free via ConferZoom.org). Students should reply to the instructor's prompts as well as to other students (i.e. you can mandate that students reply to at least one or two other students). In addition, the instructor should be engaged in the discussions, via replies or comments to students along the way, so that it feels similar to a discussion that would occur in an in-person class.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is an important part of the learning process for both faculty and students. Below are expectations of both:

- **From Instructors –** Instructors should provide substantive feedback on students' work as promptly as possible – feedback should be more than just a boilerplate assessment. Your meaningful and prompt feedback is one of the most important determining factors of student success in online courses. Students may not be able to proceed in your course until they get your feedback on their progress. Canvas has a tool called SpeedGrader that you can use to provide meaningful feedback to your students on any assignment, quiz, or graded discussion. The SpeedGrader allows you to look sequentially at each student's work and give feedback to your students with text, video, or audio comments. For more details on providing feedback in Canvas, visit: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-12746-415255023

- **From Students –** Gathering feedback from students is an important activity for improving your course. Anonymous surveys for the beginning, middle, and end of the course are highly effective. Early feedback will allow you to change direction, if necessary. Feedback at the end of the course will provide you with overall information about the effectiveness of your course. Canvas has a survey setting under the Quizzes tool that will let you create surveys for your course. For more details on creating surveys in Canvas, visit: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-13126-415268346

RESPONSE TIME

Set expectations with students regarding your response time (e.g. 24-48 hours is best practice). You can indicate in your syllabus when you will be grading assignments, responding to email, and posting to discussion boards. In addition, you can tell students if late assignments will be graded on the same timeline or on an extended timeline.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES – Below are additional resources you can reference for teaching online:

- **Regular and Effective Contact form** – Online faculty must sign this each term they teach online: https://www.riohondo.edu/distance-education/regular-effective-contact/

- **Regular and Effective Contact Video** – This video describes regular and effective contact from faculty and student perspectives: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGpXfveuXYE&feature=youtu.be

- **Course Expectation Letter (CEL)** – Online faculty can fill out this form and have their CEL linked on the DE website for students to see: https://www.riohondo.edu/distance-education/course-expectation-letter/

- **Canvas Community** – The Canvas Community website is an external resource provided by Canvas to all its users. This website contains information on all things Canvas such as Canvas Guides, Canvas Feature Ideas, events, community groups, and other helpful resources: https://community.canvaslms.com/

- **Faculty Resource Center** – You can access this by logging into your Canvas account.

- **RHC Distance Education Best Practices** – You can access this by logging into your Canvas account.

- **OEI Rubric** – The "California Virtual Campus - Online Education Initiative" (CVC-OEI) Course Design Rubric contains the online course design standards developed and adopted by the CVC-OEI. The Rubric is intended to establish standards relating to course design, interaction and collaboration, assessment, learner support, and accessibility to ensure a high-quality learning environment that promotes student success and conforms to existing regulation: https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/course-design-academy/online-course-rubric/

- **@ONE** – The Online Network of Educators (@ONE) is a collaborative, system-wide network of California Community College faculty, staff, and administrators that is coordinated by the professional development team of the CVC-OEI. @ONE provides training and professional development to support the effective use of digital tools and platforms to make the California Community Colleges (CCC) system a nationally recognized leader in online teaching and learning. Funding from the CCC Chancellor's Office ensures that @ONE's offerings are provided for free or a very low cost: https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org

- **Online Teaching Conference (OTC)** - Funded by the CCC Chancellor's Office. OTC is a yearly conference that gathers faculty, staff, and administrators leading the way in developing innovative and effective online education. Please visit this website for more information: http://onlineteachingconference.org

- **"15 Tips to Engage, Guide, and Connect with Online Students"** (by Jodi Senki, RHC full-time faculty)

- **"Title 5 and Distance Education…"** – This article has helpful tips on new regulations requiring and further defining student-to-student contact, faculty-to-student contact, and accessibility: https://www.asccc.org/content/title-5-and-distance-education-separate-course-review-enough

- **"Principles for Quality Online Teaching"** – This article has 5 key tips on teaching a quality online course: https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/course-cards/principles-quality-online-teaching/

- **Counseling (Online) –** Online counseling exists and students can set up appointments through the Counseling Department or through embedded counselors at each division.

- **Office of Distance Education Support (in Room LR 141 A/C)**
  - Zulma Calderon, Instructional Assistant *(can provide feedback on your online class)*
    - 562.463.3219 / zcalderon@riohondo.edu
  - Gabby Olmos, Instructional Assistant *(can provide feedback on your online class)*
    - 562.463.3220 / golmos@riohondo.edu
  - Jill Pfeiffer, Distance Education Coordinator (& Full-Time Faculty)
    - 562.463.7455 / jpfeiffer@riohondo.edu
  - Dr. Grant Linsell, Dean of Distance Education
    - 562.463.3471 / glinsell@riohondo.edu