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CENTER FOR
TEACHING & LEARNING

The Muskie FIN

Issue 1 • 2022

School is in Session

Welcome to the FIN

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Muskie Faculty & Instruction Newsletter, brought to you by the Center for Teaching & Learning. The FIN is a casual publication so that the CTL can help promote faculty interests, share faculty voices, and provide advice and best practices that work for instructors here at Muskingum.

Our Mission

The Center for Teaching & Learning is here to enhance teaching practices and learning outcomes by providing resources, programming, opportunities, and consultation to the Muskingum University community.

Adapting for Success: Teaching the Gen Z Student

Success in the classroom can be a double-edged sword. Once we find a “winning formula” for ourselves, we’re often tempted to stick with those strategies and methods year after year. The trouble is that the learning ecosystem is always changing. If we as educators don’t adapt to these changes, what worked yesterday may not work as well tomorrow. When that happens, we can stubbornly stick to our “tried and true” approaches and then lament the ways in which our current students don’t measure up. Or, we can evaluate how our current students approach learning and adapt accordingly.

Take our current Gen Z students. More so than previous generations, these students view education less as a pursuit of knowledge and more as a means to the practical end of employment. If a course isn’t deemed relevant to that end, they may not see a point in devoting their time and attention to it; as faculty, we can help these students understand the relevance of our content! These students also prefer hands-on/experiential learning and problem-solving over passively learning by listening and taking notes. Class discussions can be effective if they see value in the topic and if they feel their opinions are valued. They are also fans of “do-it-yourself” learning – the ability to customize a learning experience to best fit their own learning style, interests, and goals. A one-size-fits-all design for activities and assessments may therefore be less appealing and less likely to engage all students in a course. Additionally, it should be noted that teaching Gen Z students *how* to learn may be just as valuable to them as teaching them *what* to learn.

As most of us are aware, Gen Z students are “digital natives” who have grown up using mobile devices as a primary way to communicate, consume media, and engage in commerce. The centrality of these devices means that they may not see them as distractions in the classroom the way faculty do, or acknowledge that they may cause them to miss information but feel the need to “keep connected” to others online. (One study found that students average spending nearly 20% of class time on their devices for non-class purposes.) While students overwhelmingly oppose banning mobile devices, most will appreciate limitations if they are justified by the instructor. Leveraging these devices in the classroom can be another way to keep students engaged and interested.

Not sure what to try? Ask your colleagues who are finding success in engaging our current students. And ask the students themselves what would keep their interest and attention in the classroom; knowing that you value their opinions could itself help to keep students engaged in your next course.



Meet the CTL – Faculty Fellows



The Center for Teaching & Learning is comprised of four members: Leann DiAndreth-Elkins, Alaine Kay, Ana Kehrberg, and Brian King. This issue of the FIN highlights our two Faculty Fellows, Ana and Brian.

Brian King

Teaching Fellow

Department & Programs

Political Science, Pre-Law Program Coordinator Liaison, Washington Semester Program Co-Director, & John and Annie Glenn Public Service Fellows Program



When did you start teaching at Muskingum?

I started at Muskingum in 2000 after seven years of teaching part-time at the University of Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky University, and Indiana University-Purdue University (both Columbus and Indianapolis).

What's the best advice about teaching you've ever received?

When I first started teaching at Muskingum, I had so much to learn! Luckily, the faculty talked about their teaching frequently, and were always happy to share their experiences and what they did in their own courses. Someone early on gave me the advice to simply listen and observe, and to ask lots of questions. Learn from my colleagues, and in turn share what works for me. I still follow this advice more than two decades later, and it makes me a better teacher and advisor every day.

Ana Kehrberg

Teaching Fellow



Department & Programs

Psychology department & Neuroscience program

When did you start teaching at Muskingum?

I started as a Visiting Assistant professor in August 2009, then was hired into a tenure-track position in 2010.

What is your best quick tip for teaching?

Student presentations! I have trouble getting papers graded quickly, but when students give presentations, I don't get as bogged down in correcting errors in spelling and grammar. Meanwhile the students still have to research the topic, compile relevant information and present it to an audience. Typically, the students do better too, because they are presenting for their peers. An added bonus is that all the students learn from their classmates' presentations.

What is your teaching philosophy in 10 words or fewer?

Make neuroscience/research methods approachable, fascinating, and relevant to students.

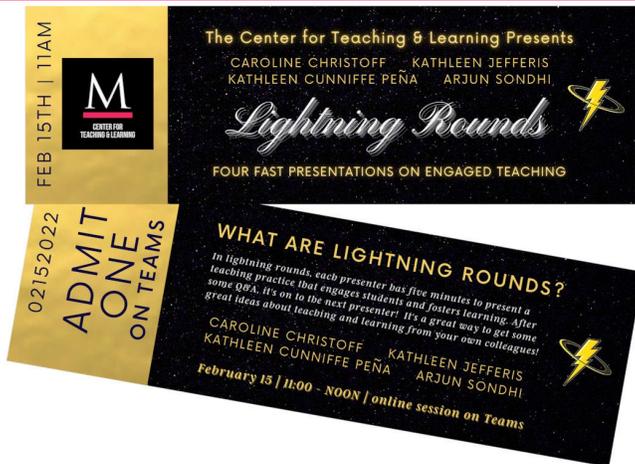
COURSE PLANNING

Schedule time with Ana or Brian to discuss:

- Engaging assignments
- Encouraging attendance
- Building classroom community
- Brainstorming new ideas
- Anything else for your class!

Email a Fellow or CTL@muskingum.edu to arrange a meeting in-person or in Teams

Upcoming Events: Spring 2022



Lightning Rounds Feb. 15, 11am Teams

In lightning rounds, each presenter has five minutes to present; after some Q&A, it's on to the next presenter! It's a great way to get some fresh great ideas about teaching and learning!

Featuring...

Caroline Christoff,
Philosophy

Kathleen Jefferis,
Nursing

Kathleen Cunniffe Peña,
Spanish

Arjun Sondhi, Economics

Dear Finn...

Dear Finn: I'm having a lot of trouble getting my students to speak up in class. I know student participation facilitates better learning, but I'm not sure how to make it happen. What should I do?

Muddled at Muskingum

Dear Muddled: There's plenty you can do! As you know, bringing Muskies out of their silence can sometimes be tough. But the more they participate, the more they'll be engaged in the course overall and the more effective you'll be as instructor. So, let's explore some things you can do to make it happen!

It can be frustrating when students don't speak up, but commit and stick with it. Make it an integral part of class and repeatedly remind students that you value their participation. Explain clearly your expectations and let them know their input is important to the success of the course. Then follow through authentically and often. Validate their responses and demonstrate that their ideas and opinions are welcome even if they don't match with yours or others in the class. Let them be wrong and use those occasions as teaching moments.

In the classroom, elicit input early and often. Consider showing up a few minutes early and making small talk with incoming students. Learn and use their names in class, too. (Hint: seating charts!) Reference their contributions later to show you were listening. Start a class with something interactive, like think-pair-share or an online poll, or break up the class with it. Just remember, these should be built into the plan, not just be an afterthought between marathon lecture segments. And don't be afraid of silence when you ask a question. Students may need time to think about what you've asked, and the extra-long pause may prompt more responses.

Also keep in mind that there are different forms of participation. Not all students will be comfortable answering questions posed by the "sage on the stage" who already knows the answers. Diversify the ways in which they can participate and more will do so overall. Even asynchronous contributions like posting to a discussion board can encourage more to participate. Students who are uncomfortable speaking up in class may be willing to participate in these other "lower stakes" formats. The more diversified and creative you can be, the greater number of students who will find ways to engage without fear of embarrassment or failure.

On that last note, consider adding some student-led and peer-to-peer participation opportunities to your classes as well. Students may be less intimidated engaging with each other than with the instructor, and there is often less fear of getting something wrong. Jigsaw groups, peer teaching of concepts, mini-presentations, and other activities allow you to be the "guide on the side" and also provide great opportunities for you to interact with students more closely as they prepare and present. Most of all, have fun! If you model this as inviting and enjoyable, you may find that they enjoy it more as well!

Finn

Finn is available to answer any and all of your questions about teaching and learning. To submit your question now, click "Ask Finn" below!

Ask Finn

For More Information, visit muskingum.edu/ctl
or email us at
ctl@muskingum.edu or bbhelp@muskingum.edu

