

Teaching Reflection

Laura M. Grabowski

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The pandemic impacted my students and my teaching in a number of ways, some of which were unexpected. In the fully virtual Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, students experienced heightened stress from many sources. In addition, many faculty heard anecdotal reports from students of increased workloads in many courses. Whatever the objective evaluation of a workload, the result of the student perception was a decrease in the ability to complete quality work within established deadlines.

I tried to adjust the structure of my courses in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 to incorporate information we had following students' experiences during Spring 2020, reducing the number of assignments and relaxing calendars. Even with these changes, I found that I needed to be agile in adjusting my plans in all my classes while the semester was underway, with both assignments and calendars. This often involved creating entirely new assignments that incorporated elements of what were normally several different assignments. This approach made the workload more tractable for the students, but greatly increased work that I needed to do on very short deadlines and made keeping up with grading extremely difficult.

I participated in one of the CCI distance learning training in Summer 2021, finding the course helpful. I did my best to incorporate some of the methods into my virtual classes in 2020-2021.

Keeping students actively engaged in virtual classes was an ongoing problem that I came close to solving. After a terrible experience (for me) with asynchronous instruction in Spring 2021, I returned to synchronous virtual class meetings in 2020-2021. This approach worked generally better for many students but not for all. Some students never had their cameras turned on during class. Most of those students had poor outcomes in the class. While I understand why we cannot require students to turn cameras on during class, even the addition of language to my syllabi to "strongly encourage" them to do so did not encourage all students. I never knew if the off-camera students were in class or not.

The pandemic year affected me as my levels of stress and fatigue built steadily from March onward, exacerbated by working throughout the entire summer with no break. 7-day work weeks were the norm for most of the fall. Spring brought little relief, and by May I was thoroughly exhausted. I have no doubt that my teaching performance reflected my deep fatigue.