

Welcome back!

Dear Colleagues,

We hope that you had a pleasant and rejuvenating summer. Over the past few months, members of the University of Toledo Teaching Center Advisory Council have been actively working on new resources and workshops to support teaching and student success at UToledo. Most recently, we enjoyed meeting or reconnecting with many of you at our New Faculty Orientation, TA Training, and Attuned Syllabi workshops!

Whether you are just starting your teaching career or are already a “seasoned sage,” we encourage everyone to visit and utilize the [Teaching Center's website](#). Here you will find links to faculty and student support services, teaching tips and toolkits, and announcements of upcoming events.

We also recognize that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of the Delta variant continue to be a source of concern and uncertainty for instructors. With this in mind, we wanted to share several suggestions that may assist you in better serving your students this fall:

1. **Send a [welcome email](#) to students before the start of the semester.** Doing so can message to students your excitement to work with them and your availability if they have questions or concerns about the class.
2. **Use the syllabus as an opportunity to acknowledge the stress that students are under and your intention to create a supportive educational environment.** We know that students are reporting record high levels of stress and anxiety, and concerns over their ability to be successful in college, [given the continuing impacts of the pandemic](#). The Student Experience Project provides some excellent ideas for how to message in your syllabi your support for students and focus on students' success in their [Syllabus Review Guide](#).
3. **When possible, record face-to-face classes** and post them to Blackboard for students who may be ill or taking care of family members. Another option is to record a brief summary of key points from the class.
4. **Check in with students frequently.** This is especially important in online classes where you do not always see the student in person. However, it is a good practice to follow regardless of course modality. You can send emails, do

quick in-class polls, or even utilize Blackboard polls or [Google forms such as this](#) (which you can copy [here](#)) to gather some quick info on how students are doing. This practice communicates to students that you care about their well-being and success, a key motivator when students begin to struggle in their courses.

5. **Identify and support struggling students early.** Remember that students may be facing challenges outside of the classroom setting, such as food or income insecurity, inadequate access to WIFI or quiet learning environments, and/or other stressors. Connect students to resources by contacting the [Center for Success Coaching](#), completing [Starfish Early Alert](#) reports, or engaging directly with students if you're comfortable doing so. See this helpful resource on [Making Effective Referrals](#).
6. **Learn about, and share with students, [campus resources available to support students' success and basic needs](#).** Include this information in your syllabi and Blackboard course shells, and mention it in class, making sure to message the use of resources such as the Learning Enhancement or Counseling Centers as normal behaviors of successful college students.
7. **Embrace flexibility and trust students.** As instructors, it can sometimes seem difficult to veer from our plans or expectations. Yet these are unpredictable times. Without sacrificing quality of instruction, consider how you can be flexible with students to help them succeed when unexpected situations arise. And keep in mind that requiring documentation when students ask for flexibility can create additional barriers to students whose financial or other life circumstances make it more challenging for them to access doctors or other such resources.
8. **Consider providing more lower-stakes graded assignments in your class.** Doing so can lower the stress and anxiety associated with single assignments worth large percentages of the grade and can support success by providing students with formative feedback they can use to improve performance in your course.
9. **Make sure to include the Fall 2021 COVID language in your syllabus** (see COVID-19 Fall 2021 syllabus language document on [the UTC Syllabus Resources webpage](#)). This language provides important information for students about our safety protocols and where to go to seek help with COVID-related concerns.
10. **Remember that we are here for you!** The University Teaching Center is happy to address any questions you have at: universityteachingcenter@utoledo.edu
Also, feel free to reach out to any of the Teaching Center Advisory Council

members, who are listed on the UTC website and represent a broad selection of colleges and disciplines here at UToledo. We are happy to help!

On behalf of the entire UToledo Teaching Center Advisory Council, we want to thank you for all that you do to support our students' success and we wish you a successful and rewarding fall semester!

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