

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: FROM THE
SYLLABUS TO THE FIRST DAY AND
BEYOND

August 22, 2019



You Can Do It!

ON INDEX CARD

1. Question/concern about your course syllabus
2. Question/concern about the first day/week of class
3. Question/concern about engaging students
4. Anything else about teaching at UConn

Think/Pair/Share/Square

[CETL](#) *is here for you!*



No Worries!

THE SYLLABUS ACTS AS A **CONTRACT** WITH YOUR STUDENTS & ALSO AS AN **ENGAGEMENT TOOL**

Provides contact information

Presents an overview of the course description, goals and objectives

Lists required materials

Describes the schedule (build in flexibility), assignments, and assessments

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Course Workload Estimator](#)

Clarifies policies (including grading criteria) and expectations

- Including important [University Policies](#)

Draws in students and generates excitement and curiosity

- [Accessible Syllabus](#)
- [Culturally Inclusive Teaching and Learning](#)

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AT UCONN

According to [Senate By-Laws](#) (see page 39), syllabi must specify

- what will be taught
- how it will be taught
- how learning will be assessed
- how grades will be assigned

Attendance **cannot** be included as part of a course grade.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AT UCONN

At the last University Senate meeting of Spring 2019, an amendment to Section II.E.10 of the [Senate By-Laws](#) was passed. This amendment specifies that:

- In-class assessments may **not** be given during the last week of classes
- Other types of assessments, such as projects or performances, may be due during the last week of classes **if stated on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester**
- Other types of assessments may also be due during time scheduled for the classes' final exam, as long as this was **on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester**

CONSIDER A STATEMENT ON SUCCESS

Include language that encourages students to reach out to you for help, adopt a growth mindset, and expect challenges and even setbacks.

Consider providing tips for success from former students or even the teaching and learning literature.

[Student Health and Wellness](#)

[Academic Achievement Center](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

SAMPLE STATEMENT ON SUCCESS ADAPTED

FROM UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Success in this course program depends heavily on your personal health and well-being. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your teaching assistants and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the semester, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you.



Err on the Side of Empathy

INCLUDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Minute Papers

Practice Quizzes

I-Clicker Questions

Muddiest Point

Anonymous Surveys

SYLLABUS

Convey contractual material—procedures and expectations

...but also

“Convey the excitement, intrigue and wonder that’s inherently part of the content you teach”

INTRODUCE THE SYLLABUS TO STUDENTS

Review the syllabus early on the course

Consider in-class activities that focus on understanding the syllabus

- syllabus speed dating
- syllabus quiz

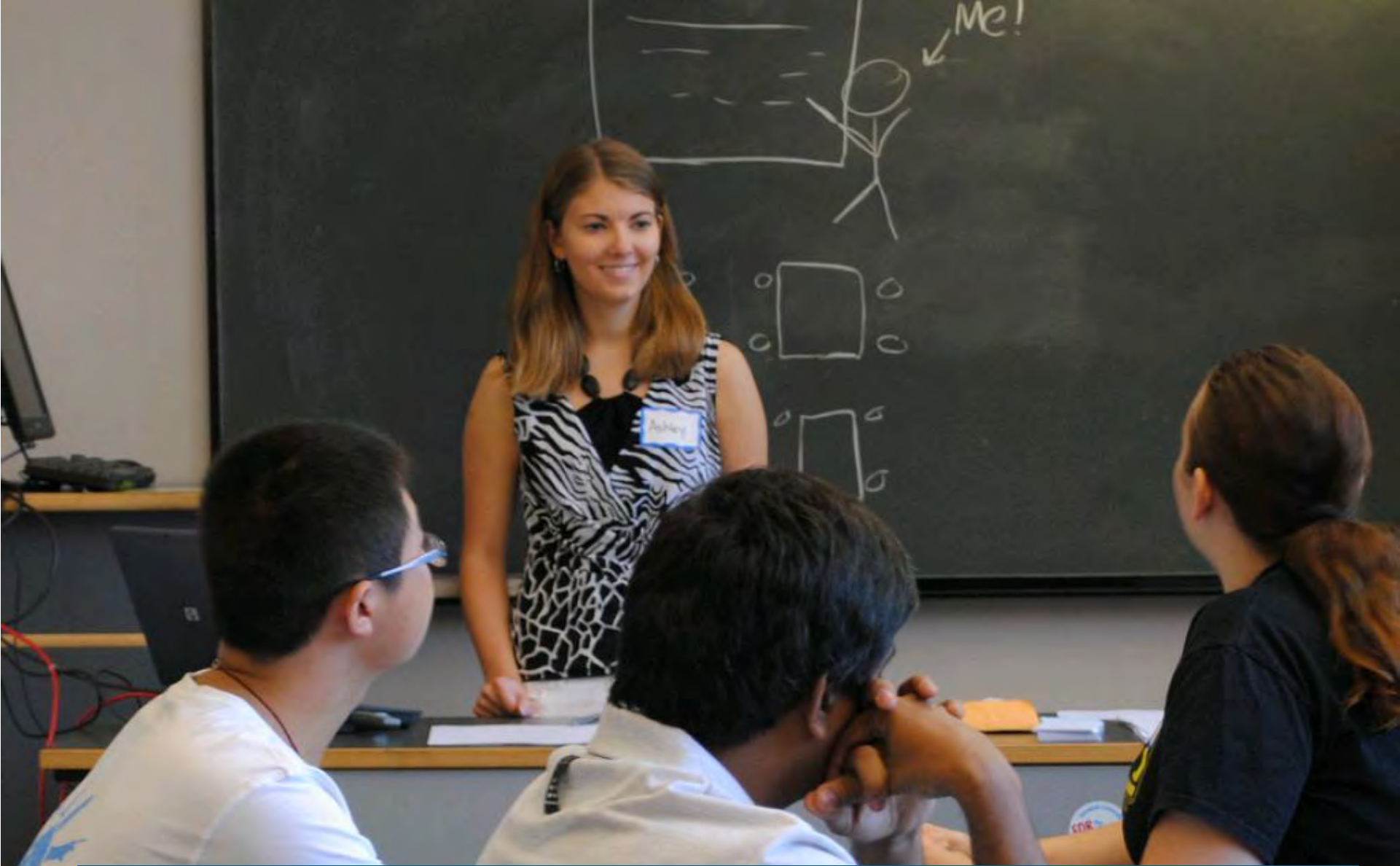
Post the syllabus on HuskyCT

LOOKING FOR HELP?

TOMORROW: Need another set of eyes on your syllabus? Have questions about designing a rubric? CETL is offering drop-in office hours on Friday, August 23, from 8:00 until 1:00 in Rowe 315. No appointment necessary. Just stop by Rowe 315.

Or email suzanne.lafleur@uconn.edu

UConn's ecampus [syllabus template](#)



The First Day of Class

DAY ONE! CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Exchange information

- Introduce yourself
- Start to get to know your students

Consider an ice breaker

- Best & worst classes
- 3 truths and 1 lie
- Scavenger hunt

Teach & model your approach

- Begin to engage students in the course

Go over course information

- Emphasize important goals, objectives and policies

WHAT IS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM?

“Student engagement is central to good teaching. In the engaged classroom, students actively **construct** understanding by **collecting**, **manipulating**, and **analyzing** information. Research supports the use of a **variety** of teaching strategies to increase student engagement.”

- ETS

ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS (NSSE)

Theme	Engagement Indicators
<u>Academic Challenge</u>	Higher-Order Learning
	Reflective & Integrative Learning
	Learning Strategies
	Quantitative Reasoning
<u>Learning with Peers</u>	Collaborative Learning
	Discussions with Diverse Others
<u>Experiences with Faculty</u>	Student-Faculty Interaction
	Effective Teaching Practices
<u>Campus Environment</u>	Quality of Interactions
	Supportive Environment

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT ITS IMPORTANCE?

Student engagement in the higher education classroom has been linked to a variety of positive outcomes, including improved **critical thinking** (Burbach, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004).

Critical thinking abilities and **emotional intelligence** are associated with grades. In regression analyses, they improved (by 50%) our capacity to account for variability in first semester college grades (Mossler, Lukhard, Gill, & Britner, 2002).

BOREDOM VS. ENGAGEMENT

Kanevsky and Keighly (2003) studied the boredom of gifted high school students who had become **disengaged** in their classrooms. They conclude that learning is the opposite of – and the antidote to – boredom.

Five (interdependent) characteristics distinguished boredom from **engagement**:

- Control
- Choice
- Challenge
- Complexity
- Caring teachers

MORE RESEARCH FINDINGS: NSSE (2004)

When faculty **EXPECT** students to study more and arrange class to this end, students **ARE** more productive.

Students who engage in “**deep**” learning activities report greater educational gains and are more engaged and satisfied.

PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES ASSOCIATED WITH GREATER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Instructors' messages of willingness to communicate, inclusion, and appreciation (Mottet, Martin, & Myers, 2004)

Active Learning (Felder, R.M. & Brent, R., 2009)

When in small-group, cooperative learning settings

- college students were more **engaged**, did more on-task thinking, perceived the task to be more important, and demonstrated more optimal levels of challenge and skill, relative to the time they spent in a large-group lecture (Peterson & Miller, 2004).

SUGGESTIONS

Build relationships in the classroom

Communicate your passion for learning & for the subject matter

Use humor – if it suits you

Use active learning activities

Prepare extensively – then strive for flexibility amidst structure

Be clear with objectives, and design assignments and exams that reflect students' knowledge and critical thinking

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

UConn's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at
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