



A monthly newsletter offering tips, strategies
and workshops for great teaching

Inspired Teaching Newsletter

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workshops for great teaching.

March 2025 | Mindfulness

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STRATEGY

Creating Space for Students to Flourish

by Alex Bitton-Bailey and AJ Jung

As educators, we strive to create courses and experiences that connect course materials with the whole student. By intentionally creating a mindful teaching practice, we can foster a sense of community, promote student wellbeing, and encourage deeper engagement with course material. Finding the balance between rigor and care and between a focus on information and applicability can be challenging. As engaged learning specialist Peter Felten notes, students “work *hard* for people who they feel know and care about them.”

Inspired by Felten's principles of relationship-rich education, here are some strategies you can incorporate into your classes to build a strong sense of community and foster meaningful connections, while engaging students' minds.

1. To cultivate a genuine (and relentless) welcome and deep care consider **"Office Hours with a Twist"**: Transform your traditional office hours into more informal "coffee chats." Invite students to join you for a casual conversation over coffee, either in person or virtually. This relaxed setting can encourage students to open up and share their thoughts, fostering a deeper connection between you and your students.
2. To inspire all students to learn consider ways to **"Feed Their Souls"**: Even in required courses, where students might not become specialists in the field, you can still create meaningful connections. Use your course to "feed their souls" by sharing your approach and perception of people and the world. Create a space where students feel valued and inspired to grow both academically and personally.
3. To develop webs of significant relationships consider incorporating **"Community Building Activities"**: Start by integrating community-building activities into your course. These can be simple icebreakers, group projects, or discussion boards where students share personal achievements and milestones. By creating opportunities for students to connect with each other, you help build a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.
4. To encourage exploration of the big questions of their lives consider **"Connecting Learning to Emotions"**: Recognize that learning is

connected to emotions, not just the conscious mind. Share your passion and emotions with your students and infuse your classroom activities with real-life scenarios that evoke genuine emotions. This approach can make learning more engaging and memorable.

By incorporating these strategies, you can create a more supportive and empowering learning environment that fosters rich relationships and enhances student well-being. Remember, as faculty, you have the power to create a space where connections flourish and learning becomes a deeply personal and transformative experience.

References

Four Principles of Relationship-Rich Education. (2020, December). Center for Engaged Learning.

https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/aiovg_videos/four-principles-of-relationship-rich-education/

AI TIP OF THE MONTH

Instructors from across UF are using AI to support students, connect more deeply, and make learning meaningful. The following examples in the “AI Across the Curriculum” series come from Agriculture, Arts, Education, and Sciences.

- [Dr. Sarah Doore](#): Meeting student needs for flexibility and life circumstances in a large course is hard, but AI can make it easier.
- [Darius Brown](#): Digital Worlds students use AI to help them conceptualize how lighting or camera-angle changes will impact their final video.
- [Dr. Soohyoun Ahn](#): In large courses, AI-enabled tools, like Perusall, can increase student interaction with their peers.
- [Dr. Taryn Brown](#): AI is a tool for both students and teachers to support their voice and extend their creative capacity.

FEATURED PROGRAM

Elevate Faculty Development Program

Deadline: May 12, 2025

What is Elevate and who is it for?

Embark on a guided expedition with Elevate, a Center for Teaching Excellence faculty development program. Work one-on-one with our consultants to create a customized trajectory for professional development, focusing on areas of growth you identify through self-reflection. Whether you're a self-starter navigating your first semesters at UF, or an experienced faculty member, Elevate is a valuable resource that can help you reach your professional development goals!

Accepted participants will start August 2025.

[Learn more](#)

FEATURED WORKSHOPS



You Are Here | Current Products and Support Provided by Turnitin at UF

Wednesday, April, 2, 2025

10:00 - 1:00 PM EDT

302 Tigert Hall

Join us for a session to discuss the current products licensed at the University of Florida provided by Turnitin. We will cover best practices for

Feedback Studio, Draft Coach and Gradescope. Discover the “why” behind the products, learn when these products are most beneficial to instructors and best practices. Resources and additional guidance will be provided and we will leave plenty of time for questions and answers.

Lunch is included with this session from 12-1pm.

[Register here.](#)

The Road Ahead | Turnitin’s Roadmap and Product Vision

Wednesday, April, 2, 2025

1:00 - 3:00 PM EDT

302 Tigert Hall

Get your creative juices flowing. Write engaging and informative content that will help your readers understand your message.

[Register here.](#)

Open Gradescope Information Session and Demo

Wednesday, April, 2, 2025

3:00 - 4:00 PM EDT

302 Tigert Hall

This session will explore how Gradescope, a feedback and assessment platform from Turnitin, helps faculty by providing digital tools for paper based exams. Gradescope provides both bubble sheets to handle multiple choice assessments and the ability to upload long form exams for more holistic assessment. Whether you are trying to give better feedback in math and engineering, provide students a way to answer complex scientific questions, or just assess short answer or multiple choice work, this session will show you how Gradescope can make grading easier.

[Register here.](#)

Turnitin Open Hours

Wednesday, April, 2, 2025 at 4:00 - 4:30 PM EDT

Drop in to have a one on one conversation with a member of the Turnitin team.

[Register here.](#)

Turnitin Product Workshops with Faculty & Teaching Support Staff | AI & Clarity

Thursday, April, 3, 2025

9:00 - 10:30 AM EDT

302 Tigert Hall

Meeting with the Turnitin team to take a deeper dive into how AI has impacted teaching and learning.

Topics can include but not limited to:

- How AI is influencing course design, assessment strategies, and shift toward experiential learning
- The flexible use and accuracy of Turnitin's AI indicator (including 3rd party research affirming our results), Turnitin's new student writing tool, Clarity, is a natural complement to our suite of tools helping instructors and students navigate this era of rapid technological change.
- The benefits of using Turnitin's suite of solutions as a holistic approach to assessing students work in order to maintain data privacy, FERPA compliance, and the responsible use of AI
- Strategies and tools to bridge the gap between students and instructors to instill confidence that student work is original and representative of their learning.
- Product demos of Clarity, the Similarity Report and the AI Indicator

[Register here.](#)

CTE AWARDS

Badges:

Active Learning:

- Catia Silva

Artificial Intelligence:

- Jeremy Block
- Catia Silva
- Holly Fremen
- Tobias Lodemann

Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL):

- Forough Foroutan Jahromi

Digital Literacy:

- Kate Norris

Global Learning:

- Carrie Martins
- Glenn Kepic
- Karina Kolb
- Doni Walker-Jackson
- Talline Martins
- Monika Oli
- Carol Mcauliffe
- Christine Richmond
- Taylor Simpson
- Goksun Goksel
- Brittany Hoover
- Gwynn Cadwallader
- Swapna Kumar
- Sebastian Rodriguez

Student Focused Teaching:

- Zachary Mott
- Patricia Sohn

Certificates:

CIRTL Associate Certificate:

- David Herman
- Patricia Sohn
- Jerne Shapiro

Great Teaching for New Faculty Certificate:

- Tom Zhang
- Thomas Vozar
- Casey Rowe
- Estelle Martin
- Michael Hodges

Global Teaching & Learning Certificate:

- Tiff Jenson
- Pasha Agoes
- Larisa Olesova
- Heather Gibson
- Sharon Difino
- Marina Klimenko
- Ravi Ghadge
- Huan Chen
- Christine Voigt
- Sujata Krishna

Great Teaching Certificate:

TA Edition:

- Alexandre (Alex) Menager

- Kate Norris
 - Michael Hodges
 - Erin Larkin
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HELPFUL TIP

Two Pro Tips from UF faculty to Increase Mindfulness

Here are two ways UF faculty have incorporated mindfulness practices into their courses to emphasize personal connections, develop webs of relationships, and feed the souls of their students.

Incorporate Physical Activity into Your Lectures: Take a cue from Dr. Wendy Suzuki, a renowned neuroscientist, and try integrating physical activities into your classroom lectures. Simple exercises like stretching, light aerobics, or even short dance breaks can help reduce anxiety and boost brain capacity. This not only makes students more attentive and engaged but also creates a dynamic and supportive learning environment.

Create a "Celebrate This" Discussion Board: Follow Dr. Joslyn Ahlgren's successful practice by setting up a "Celebrate This" discussion board in your online courses. Encourage your students to share their achievements and milestones, like landing internships, adopting pets, or acing tough exams. Sharing your own celebrations too can foster connection, support, and personalization.


TECH TIP OF THE MONTH


UF's Center for Teaching Excellence in coordination with Unizin Faculty Development subcommittee is excited to announce the fourth in our series of five Generative AI Panel Discussions!

Our fourth panel, focusing on "Generative AI should foster equity and ensure accessibility for all learners" will be held on March 26, 2025, at 11:00 AM EST. All UF faculty and staff are welcome to attend.

Join us for the next session in our Generative AI series, hosted by the Faculty Development Subcommittee!

 Date: March 26, 2025

 Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM EST (10 AM CST | 9 AM MST | 8 AM PST)

 Topic: Principle 4 – Generative AI should foster equity and ensure accessibility for all learners

Mark your calendars and [register now!](#)

DID YOU KNOW?



To continue to refine your teaching, sign up now for the CIT Interface Conference and RiTL Symposium this spring. Consider inviting colleagues and friends outside of UF to join these conversations.

Interface promotes innovative strategies for teaching and learning through interactive breakout sessions. This one-day event will feature sessions designed to integrate ways to support well-being into teaching and learning. This year's keynote speaker will be Peter Felten.

Join us on **April 22, 2025**, for a transformative day exploring the multifaceted dimensions of promoting well-being in higher education. This conference will delve into strategies for building inclusive and supportive

learning and teaching environments, addressing faculty burnout, and fostering the mental health of everyone in the campus community. By prioritizing well-being, we can empower each other to thrive in an increasingly complex academic landscape.

Event Details:

- **Date:** April 22, 2025
- **Location:** Emerson Alumni Hall, Gainesville, FL
- **Time:** 8:00 AM – 4:10 PM
- **Registration Cost:** \$80 (includes breakfast and lunch), free for UF members (faculty, students, staff)
- **Open to the public**

Highlights:

- Participate in interactive breakout sessions and connect with sponsors.
- Enter drawings to win exciting prizes.
- Walk away with new connections and ideas you can immediately apply to your courses.

We look forward to welcoming you to Interface 2025 and working together to create a more supportive and engaging educational environment.

[Register here](#)



RiTL 2025 Symposium

Date & Time: April 24, 2025, 8:30 AM – 12 PM

Location: Reitz Union 3315

Keynote: Stephen L. Chew, Ph.D.

RiTL (Research in Teaching and Learning) at UF is specialized research that delves deeply into how students learn within and across disciplines. UF's RiTL community of researchers and educators will engage in the deliberate, systematic, and reflective use of research methods to develop and implement teaching practices that advance field-specific learning. RiTL at UF includes scholarly work related to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), Teaching as Research (TAR) and Discipline-Based Education Research (DBER). Who should attend? All faculty including clinical faculty, instructional faculty, practitioners, faculty considering promotion, department chairs, staff, and librarians interested in teaching-focused research.

[Register here](#)

SPOTLIGHT

Transform Your Teaching with Daily Affirmations and Scientist

Spotlights: Take inspiration from Martina Sumner, an innovative chemistry instructor at UF, who has transformed her teaching approach by integrating daily affirmations and spotlighting scientists who have overcome significant challenges. Inspired by an article, Martina decided to give these practices a try, despite initial uncertainties. Start each class with a positive affirmation to boost student confidence and introduce a "Scientist of the Day" segment to highlight trailblazers who have made remarkable contributions to your discipline. Include metacognitive questions in your weekly quizzes to encourage students to reflect on their knowledge gaps and personal growth. End exams with affirmations and reflective questions to foster ongoing self-awareness and preparation for future assessments. The results can be profound; not only can students thrive academically and emotionally but even teaching assistants can experience positive changes. This simple yet powerful approach can significantly enhance well-being, inclusivity, and

mental health, creating a more supportive and empowering learning environment for all.

Zero Textbook Cost Initiative: The Center for Teaching Excellence is excited to announce that we are expanding the Affordable UF Badge program to include an additional badge representing courses that are “ZTC” or have [zero textbook cost](#). This badge recognizes courses that go above and beyond in delivering value for UF students by requiring no additional cost beyond tuition and fees. The new program goes into effect for the Summer 2025/Fall 2025 textbook adoption cycle and utilizes the existing Affordable UF application in the textbook adoption system. Consider [scheduling a consultation](#) with the CTE’s Textbook Affordability Coordinator, Ryan Rushing, to discuss ideas to help your course become eligible for the Affordable UF and ZTC badge.



Inspire, Ignite, and Innovate with CTE!

We are always looking for fresh voices to lead workshops, share a passion for teaching in our podcast, and engage with audiences at our Interface Teaching Conference. CTE is dedicated to honoring exceptional teaching. If you or someone you know would like to partner with or should be recognized by CTE [please email us](#).

UF Center for Teaching Excellence

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