

INSTRUCTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

UW-MADISON TEACHING ACADEMY
MEMBERS' ROUNDTABLE (APRIL, 2022)

Greetings, everyone.

I'm Morton Ann Gernsbacher, I'm a Vilas Research Professor and the Sir Frederic Bartlett Professor of Psychology,
and I'm a member of the Executive Committee of the UW-Madison Teaching Academy.

Thank you for joining our UW-Madison Teaching Academy Members' Roundtable to discuss
Instructional Flexibility. I am accompanied today by three fabulous co-hosts:



**JOHN
ZUMBRUNNEN**

Vice Provost for
Teaching &
Learning



**JOHN
MARTIN**

Teaching &
Learning
Specialist;
CTLM



**CORISSA
LOTTA**

Faculty
Associate,
Counseling
Psychology

John Zumbrunnen, who is the Vice Provost for Teaching & learning,
John Martin, who is a Teaching & Learning Specialist at the Center for Teaching Learning and Mentoring,
and Corissa Lotta, who is a Faculty Associate in Counseling Psychology.

We're building our Members' Roundtable today



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INSTRUCTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

UW-MADISON TEACHING ACADEMY

UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

on the topic of Instructional Flexibility
b/c back in February,
the Teaching Academy held a UCLaSS session
on the same topic.
UCLaSS stands for

INSTRUCTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

UW-MADISON TEACHING ACADEMY

UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

Undergraduate Chat Learn and Share Space,
and UCLaSS sessions are like focus groups
in which groups of students
tell us about the teaching and learning challenges they face
and needs they have so that we can
alleviate those challenges and meet those needs.

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UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

This particular UCLASS was suggested by
Vice Provost John Zumbrunnen in response
to concerns and recommendations
he'd directly received from students.

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UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

Although some of the students' concerns about instructional flexibility
arose during the pandemic,
in reality their concerns preceded the pandemic
and have succeeded the pandemic.
It's just that the pandemic magnified the concerns.

INSTRUCTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

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UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

During the incredibly productive
UCLASS session
back in February
the students generated a list of

6: WHAT WORKS

6: WHAT DOESN'T WORK

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UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

6 “What Works” and 6 “What Doesn’t Work,”
meaning six policies, procedures, and techniques
that they’ve experienced in their classes
that have contributed to their academic success
and six policies, procedures, and techniques
that they’ve experienced in their classes
that have impeded their academic success

6: WHAT WORKS

6: WHAT DOESN'T WORK

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UCLASS (FEBRUARY, 2022)

So, what we're going to do today is work through these 6 what works and 6 what doesn't work recommendations to generate ways that we can implement each recommendation and contribute to student's success.

WHAT WORKS #1

**TIMELY ACCESS TO RECORDED
LECTURES, LECTURE SLIDES, AND/OR
LECTURE NOTES**

UW-Madison Students

What Works #1:

Timely access to recorded lectures,
lecture slides, and/or lecture notes,

meaning either before or shortly after
the lecture has occurred.

WHAT WORKS #1

**TIMELY ACCESS TO RECORDED
LECTURES, LECTURE SLIDES, AND/OR
LECTURE NOTES**

UW-Madison Students

I know some instructors resist
providing recorded lectures, lecture slides,
or lecture notes
because they think students
won't attend class.

WHAT WORKS #1

**TIMELY ACCESS TO RECORDED
LECTURES, LECTURE SLIDES, AND/OR
LECTURE NOTES**

UW-Madison Students

However, the data are very clear that using making recorded lectures available shortly after a lecture, for example, using lecture capture, does NOT affect students' attendance.

WHAT WORKS #1

**TIMELY ACCESS TO RECORDED
LECTURES, LECTURE SLIDES, AND/OR
LECTURE NOTES**

UW-Madison Students

As for lecture slides and lecture notes,
the scientific literature shows that
providing outlines, such as most instructors put on a PPT slide,
facilitates students' note taking and review.
The data regarding instructors providing detailed notes
is more ambiguous. But lecture outlines really
do help students.

IMPLEMENTATION #1: TIMELY ACCESS TO INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- ▶ John Z: observation, emphasis on sharing outline, think about what we put on slides; probably putting too much on your slides
- ▶ John M: Can open the entire course before the course begins, having the opportunity to scan through in advance
- ▶ Corissa: teaching with grad students much easier, opens the PDF before

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some ways you know
for implementing students' need for
timely access to instructional materials?

WHAT WORKS #2

**BUILT-IN COURSE FLEXIBILITY (E.G.,
ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS A SET NUMBER
OF EXCUSED ABSENCES WITHOUT NEEDING
TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OR SHARE
TRAUMA OR ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS TO
DROP A SET NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS)**

UW-Madison Students

What Works #2:
Built-in course flexibility,
for example, allowing all students
a set number of excused absences
without students needing to provide documentation
or share their trauma with their instructors,
or, as another example,
allowing all students to drop a set number of assignments.

WHAT WORKS #2

**BUILT-IN COURSE FLEXIBILITY (E.G.,
ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS A SET NUMBER
OF EXCUSED ABSENCES WITHOUT NEEDING
TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OR SHARE
TRAUMA OR ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS TO
DROP A SET NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS)**

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Again, the data show that building in course flexibility through a set number of excused absences or a set number of assignments or even quizzes that can be dropped facilitates students' success.

WHAT WORKS #2

**BUILT-IN COURSE FLEXIBILITY (E.G.,
ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS A SET NUMBER
OF EXCUSED ABSENCES WITHOUT NEEDING
TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OR SHARE
TRAUMA OR ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS TO
DROP A SET NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS)**

UW-Madison Students

Most notably, such standard and applied to all students policies greatly facilitate lower income and first gen students' success b/c not all students feel empowered to ask instructors for extensions or excused absences.

WHAT WORKS #2

**BUILT-IN COURSE FLEXIBILITY (E.G.,
ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS A SET NUMBER
OF EXCUSED ABSENCES WITHOUT NEEDING
TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OR SHARE
TRAUMA OR ALLOWING ALL STUDENTS TO
DROP A SET NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS)**

UW-Madison Students

In fact, the data show that students who
are most likely to ask
for extensions, excused absences, and
re-dos on assignments and quizzes,
are the students who score highly on
self-reported measures of academic entitlement.

IMPLEMENTATION #2: FLEXIBILITY RE: ABSENCES/DROPPED ASSIGNMENTS

- ▶ John M: changing the frame of assuming trying to cheat rather than having
- ▶ Corissa: work in progress
- ▶ John Z: still need to signal to students that you're a safe person; using exit tickets

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some ways you know
for implementing EQUITABLY students' need for
flexibility regarding absences and dropped assignments?

WHAT WORKS #3

**MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO
DEMONSTRATE MASTERY (RATHER THAN
A MIDTERM EXAM, FINAL EXAM, AND A
PAPER BEING THE ONLY OPPORTUNITIES
TO DEMONSTRATE MASTERY)**

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What Works #3:

Multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery
(rather than a midterm exam, final exam, and a paper
being the only opportunities to demonstrate mastery)

IMPLEMENTATION #3: MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MASTERY/GRADES

- ▶ John M: adding the option of
- ▶ Corissa: variety of different assignments spread out
- ▶ John Z: having some assignments that don't require a lot of grading or feedback

John Z, John M, and Corissa?
My classes, taught without exams.
Rather they're taught with numerous
active-learning assignments.
In fact, a lot!
For a four credit course, 84 assignments
For a three-credit course, 70 assignments.
No assignment is make or break.
Students can miss several assignments
and still earn a good grade.

WHAT WORKS #4

VARIETY IN ASSIGNMENTS (E.G., MODALITY OR MATERIALS)

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What Works #4:

Variety in assignments (e.g., modality or materials).

As a card carrying cognitive scientist,
I need to remind everyone that there isn't much empirical support
for the notion of learning styles, meaning that some people
are visual learners, others are auditory learners.

WHAT WORKS #4

VARIETY IN ASSIGNMENTS (E.G., MODALITY OR MATERIALS)

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In fact, even people's preferences for visual versus verbal versus kinetic and the like don't always predict their proficiency with those modalities.

BUT variety, per se, in learning approaches is not a bad thing!

IMPLEMENTATION #4: VARIETY IN ASSIGNMENTS (MODALITIES & MATERIALS)

- ▶ Corissa: lot of smaller assignments, individual vs small group, papers, reflections, experiential
- ▶ xxx give students choices
- ▶ xxx

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some ways you know
for implementing students' need for
variety in assignments?

WHAT WORKS #5

OPPORTUNITIES, SCAFFOLDED BY THE INSTRUCTOR, FOR STUDENTS TO CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER DURING THE COURSE

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What Works #5:
Opportunities, scaffolded by the instructor,
for students to connect
with one another during the course.

WHAT WORKS #5

OPPORTUNITIES, SCAFFOLDED BY THE INSTRUCTOR, FOR STUDENTS TO CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER DURING THE COURSE

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I've written an entire scholarly article cautioning about that. Instead, what students are looking for are ways to connect with one another socially and emotionally, not to have to rely on one another to get their work done.

WHAT WORKS #5

OPPORTUNITIES, SCAFFOLDED BY THE INSTRUCTOR, FOR STUDENTS TO CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER DURING THE COURSE

UW-Madison Students

I've written an entire scholarly article cautioning about that. Instead, what students are looking for are ways to connect with one another socially and emotionally, not to have to rely on one another to get their work done.

IMPLEMENTATION #5: OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO CONNECT

- ▶ John Z: Rose, Bud, Thorn, allow students to check in and build connection across (randomly assign students to group); Discussion Project, random group generator, some kind of meaningful thing for them to engage
- ▶ John M: scaling it up, think pair share
- ▶ xxx

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some ways you know
for implementing students' need for
student connection — WITHOUT relying
on traditional GroupWork,
which most students detest?

WHAT WORKS #6

REMOTE SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS (VIA ZOOM, PHONE, OR OTHER SYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION) AND MECHANISMS FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH INSTRUCTORS VIA ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION (EMAIL, TEXT CHAT, AND THE LIKE)

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What Works #6:

Remote synchronous office hours
(via Zoom, phone, or other synchronous communication)
and mechanisms for students to engage
with instructors via asynchronous communication
(email, text chat, and the like)

WHAT WORKS #6

REMOTE SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS (VIA ZOOM, PHONE, OR OTHER SYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION) AND MECHANISMS FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH INSTRUCTORS VIA ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION (EMAIL, TEXT CHAT, AND THE LIKE)

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Again, the data demonstrate, as does personal experience, that traditional in-person office hours are under-utilized. Gone is the conception, even on residential campuses, that students can walk over to an instructor's office on Monday at 1pm or Thursday at 10 am.

WHAT WORKS #6

REMOTE SYNCHRONOUS OFFICE HOURS (VIA ZOOM, PHONE, OR OTHER SYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION) AND MECHANISMS FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH INSTRUCTORS VIA ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION (EMAIL, TEXT CHAT, AND THE LIKE)

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Anecdotally, I can share that during the pandemic when academic advisors across the campus turned to remote office hours, they witnessed massive increase in attendance at office hours.

IMPLEMENTATION #6: REMOTE OFFICE HOURS AND ASYNCHRONOUS COMM.

- ▶ John Z: Both and – both in person and remote. both synchronous and asynchronous
- ▶ xxx
- ▶ xxx

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some ways you know
for implementing students' need for
remote office hours and asynchronous
instructor communication?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #1



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Now we're going to shift
from the six things that students told us
DO WORK to the six things that students told us
Do NOT work.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #1

EXPECTING STUDENT TO GET LECTURE NOTES OR OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT A MISSED CLASS SESSION FROM FELLOW STUDENTS RATHER THAN THE INSTRUCTOR.

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What Doesn't Work #1:
Expecting student to get lecture notes
or other information about a missed class session
from fellow students rather than directly from the instructor.

#1 WHAT DO INSTEAD OF EXPECTING STUDENTS TO OBTAIN MISSED MATERIALS

- ▶ John M puts discussion into the presenter notes in Google Slides
- ▶ Corissa: share contact info with at least two or three other students in the course
- ▶ John Z: meeting them halfway, take responsibility for their learning

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some things you know
to do instead of
expecting students to obtain missed materials?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #2

**RELYING SOLELY ON TEACHING ASSISTANTS
FOR ONE-TO-ONE STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR
INTERACTION**

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What Doesn't Work #2:
Relying solely on teaching assistants
for one-to-one student-instructor interaction

#2 WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF RELYING ON TAs FOR STUDENT INTERACTION

- ▶ be careful about breaking down the authority acknowledge that is different reflection on individual identities
- ▶ xxx
- ▶ xxx

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some things you know
to do instead of
relying on TAs for student interaction?

My own courses, quite large, 300 students
I email each student personally three times during the term.
I also ask them to email me directly if they have questions.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #3

NIGHT EXAMS, BECAUSE THEY ARE CHALLENGING FOR STUDENTS DUE TO THEIR WORK OR FAMILY SCHEDULES AND DUE TO HAVING ALREADY COMPLETED A FULL DAY OF CLASSES

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What Doesn't Work #3:
Night exams,
because they are challenging for students
due to their work or family schedules
and due to having already completed a full day of classes

#3 WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF NIGHT EXAMS, NIGHT REVIEW SESSIONS, ETC

▶ XXX

▶ XXX

▶ XXX

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some things you know
to do instead of
night exams, night review sessions, and the like?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #4

TIMED EXAMS, TIME-LIMITED QUIZZES, AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS THAT CAUSE ANXIETY, AS WELL AS TEST SURVEILLANCE SOFTWARE (E.G., HONORLOCK) THAT CAN BE BIASED

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What doesn't work #4:

Timed exams, time-limited quizzes,
and other assessments that cause anxiety,
as well as test surveillance software
(e.g., Honorlock) that can be biased

#4 WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF TIMED EXAMS AND HONORLOCK

- ▶ variety of assessment, remove incentive dishonesty
- ▶ xxx
- ▶ xxx

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some things you know
to do instead of
timed exams and Honorlock?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #5

ASSIGNING STUDENTS TO USE TECHNOLOGY THAT THE INSTRUCTOR THEMSELVES HASN'T USED

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What Doesn't Work #5:
Assigning students to use technology
that the instructor themselves hasn't used.

Appreciate it's tough. Google Chat bug.
Literally work with someone at Google to get it fixed.

#5 WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF TECHNOLOGY THAT INSTRUCTOR HASN'T USED

- ▶ XXX
- ▶ XXX
- ▶ XXX

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some things you know
to do instead of
using technology that the instructor hasn't used?

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #6

PROVIDING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY WHEN REQUESTED BY MCBURNEY (AND ONLY FOR MCBURNEY REGISTERED STUDENTS) RATHER THAN BUILDING ACCOMMODATIONS INTO THE COURSE AND MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS.

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What Doesn't Work #6:
Providing disability accommodations
only when requested by McBurney
(and only for McBurney registered students)
rather than building accommodations into the course
and making accommodations available to all students.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #6

PROVIDING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY WHEN REQUESTED BY MCBURNEY (AND ONLY FOR MCBURNEY REGISTERED STUDENTS) RATHER THAN BUILDING ACCOMMODATIONS INTO THE COURSE AND MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS.

UW-Madison Students

This is an area that's near and dear my heart. In fact it's a core piece of my own scholarship, so I was delighted to have the students generate this recommendation on their own.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #6

PROVIDING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY WHEN REQUESTED BY MCBURNEY (AND ONLY FOR MCBURNEY REGISTERED STUDENTS) RATHER THAN BUILDING ACCOMMODATIONS INTO THE COURSE AND MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS.

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What most instructors and even some students don't realize is that registering with Disability Services not just on our campus but every campus is costly. It's financially costly because it requires documentation from external health care providers, and that documentation can cost thousands of dollars.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #6

PROVIDING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY WHEN REQUESTED BY MCBURNEY (AND ONLY FOR MCBURNEY REGISTERED STUDENTS) RATHER THAN BUILDING ACCOMMODATIONS INTO THE COURSE AND MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS.

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It's also costly with regard to stigma and cultural barriers and stereotypes.
Simply put: There's a reason why students registered with Disability Services not just on our campus but across the country are whiter and more affluent.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK #6

PROVIDING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY WHEN REQUESTED BY MCBURNEY (AND ONLY FOR MCBURNEY REGISTERED STUDENTS) RATHER THAN BUILDING ACCOMMODATIONS INTO THE COURSE AND MAKING ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS.

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In fact, there are more students registered with Disability Services on elite private liberal arts colleges than there are at two year or community colleges. In addition, the data are robust in showing that just like curb cuts help everyone, not just people with mobility disabilities, providing instructional accommodations for everyone helps everyone.

#6 WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF PROVIDING "GATED" DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

- ▶ John Z: resource issues Finding space to make that happen
- ▶ xxx
- ▶ xxx

John Z, John M, and Corissa,
what are some ways you know
for implementing students' need for
remote office hours and asynchronous
instructor communication?