Course Revisions

Thinking Ahead to Next Semester

Course development is an ever-evolving process. We tweak and adjust for many reasons. Maybe we decide an activity didn't quite work the way we intended, or we discover new content to share with students. Early planning can make the revision process more efficient and less stressful.

PLANNING AHEAD: IN DEVELOPMENT

Planning course updates can happen when the course is being developed. If you're fortunate enough to have developed the course you will be teaching, you likely have incorporated strategies for future updates. These might include anticipating the abbreviated Summer semester by having a plan to adjust lessons to the shorter term, or incorporating current event activities that can be easily updated.

PLANNING UPDATES: EXISTING COURSE

Planning course updates early will provide you with concrete steps you can follow before the upcoming semester begins. Course updates can be separated into two categories, content updates and administrative updates. Begin with content updates first, since they often take the most time.

CONTENT UPDATES

Review notes you took during the semester. Are there activities you feel could more effectively meet learning objectives? Were there points where students got hung up?

Choose a completion date for revisions before the new semester begins. Commit to this date and plan your updates backward from that point.

Review and test supporting technology. Is the technology current, and is it still the best tool for achieving your learning outcomes? Are tutorials needed to support new technologies?

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Platform

- Is your course available for students?
- Is your course in Blackboard?
    - If not, is there an announcement in Blackboard directing students elsewhere?
        - If not, do students need to be added to another course content platform?
        - If not, are there clear instructions for students to access course content?

Announcements

- Is your welcome announcement up to date?
- Have old announcements been deleted or hidden for later?

Syllabus and Schedule

- Is your syllabus updated?
- Is your class calendar/schedule updated?

Assignments and Other Content

- Is there a first contact assignment due during the first week of class?
- Is the first assignment due on or before the end of the fee payment deadline?
- Has the order of content been changed (is that reflected in the grade center)?
- Is your contact information correct?
- If you link to resources outside of Blackboard or use another platform, do the links and multimedia work as anticipated?

Grading and the Blackboard Grade Center

- Are your grade center columns ordered correctly?
- Are custom grade columns needed?
- Do due dates show up in at least two of three places?
    - Unit Dates (at unit level where you have the module/unit/week headings)
    - Grade Center Due Dates in Blackboard (using the set Grade Center Due Dates Course Tool)
    - Class schedule
- Are assignments submitted using the Blackboard Assignment tool? Accepting assignments via email can be problematic.
- Are there proctored exams in the course?
- Are there exam request links for students, and are exams scheduled during UAF eLearning Exam Center business hours?

Finally, ask someone to check spelling, links, and embedded media. Sometimes unexpected browser behaviors are easily caught by someone viewing your course on another computer. Getting a course ready for the new semester always seems to take more time than we anticipate; getting an early start will make that hectic time easier for you.