

Use infographics to build community and critical thinking

As your class takes off at the beginning of this semester, you likely have some kind of introductory activity planned for your students to help build class community. This kind of activity gives your students a chance to get to know each other and for you know more about your students.



Methods for gathering information

- survey or quiz in Blackboard
- Google Form (see [sample](#))
- Discussion in Blackboard or website
- show of hands
- students actively move around room based on answers to your questions (i.e. Juniors and higher on left, Sophomores and lower on right, non-degree seeking in middle)

In many cases you already know some details about your students from past encounters or at the very least, information from their records in UAOnline: class standing, degree status (i.e., degree-seeking and major, or non-degree-seeking), transfer student, permanent address and other details depending on the student and your role in the department. Reviewing this information gives you an idea of what your class make-up is like. But there is other information that will help you and fellow students understand each other better that goes beyond what is provided by directory-like information. Profile information such as

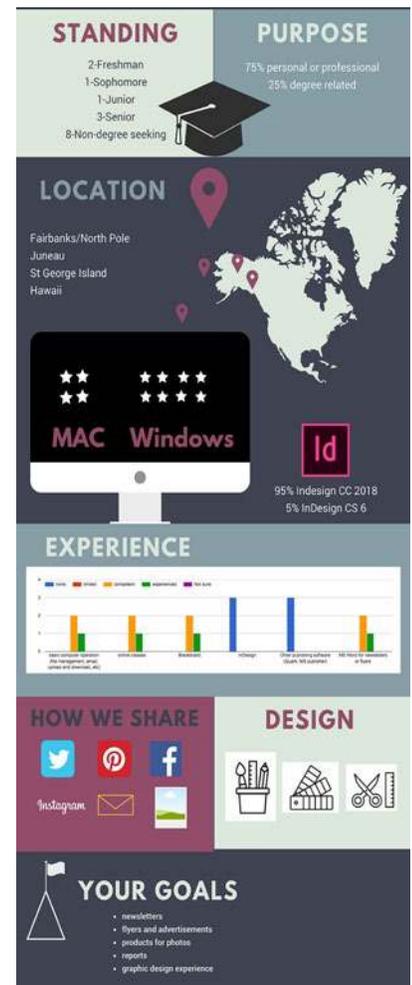
- What is the student's preferred name or nickname?
- Is English a second language?
- Is the student full-time or part-time?
- Is the course required or an elective?

Relevant to online courses:

- access to a home or work computer/laptop or dependent on computer lab
- experience with online classes
- practical knowledge of Blackboard
- physical location

And most importantly for all students, what is the student's personal goal or intended learning objective(s) for taking the class? This serves two purposes, first giving you an idea of what is the student's investment in the course and second, makes clear to the student that your expectation for the class is not for them to be a passive observer but rather an active and engaged participant.

However you design your activity, you should collect the answers to your prompts so you can synthesize them and return them to your students for an overall view of the class. Synthesizing data involves critical thinking, a skill that we all want our students to have. Displaying this information can be accomplished by creating an infographic. An infographic uses visuals to display data or information about a topic in an easily understandable format. Providing a model of how data might be visualized through an infographic can help students use this process for their own research.



Online tools for making infographics

Most of these have free versions with limitations:

- Canva <https://www.canva.com/create/infographics/>
- Piktochart <https://piktochart.com/>
- Venngage <https://venngage.com/>
- Infogram <https://infogram.com>

“The process of transferring data from alphabetic to visual texts forces students not just to comprehend the information they read but also to apply the higher-order thinking that research assignments are designed to teach: to synthesize multiple sources, to interpret the relationships between those sources (both for themselves and for an audience), and to develop their own interpretation of the data.” ~ Annie S. Mendenhall & Sarah Summers from [Designing Research: Using Infographics to Teach Design Thinking in Composition](#)