



PULASKI TECHNICAL COLLEGE'S

Teaching Online Tips

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We're Back

After a short hiatus in November and December, the Teaching Online Tips newsletter is back in full swing. Somehow, the "month of the living dead" speech that I give my students should have been given to me. But all is well now, and we have some exciting activities planned for this year.

First things first, an update on the spring 2006 numbers:

337	Online sections
1031	Students taking ALL of their classes online
2585	Students taking at least one online class

To appreciate these numbers, let's stroll down memory lane for a bit. In the spring of 1999, we had 5 sections and 65 students (duplicated). In the spring of 2002, we had 52 sections and 463 students (unduplicated) taking at least one online class. Just two years ago—spring 2004—we had 295 students taking only online classes. Who is responsible for this enormous growth? You are! Thank you for being so willing to get trained, teach, and continue to improve professionally so that we can provide quality online classes. Who knows where we will be in just a few years. Scary, I know.

It's Online, So It Should Be Easier and Less Work, Right?

I know you are tired of hearing that question from students who want to enroll in online classes to avoid the "hassle" of all that work in on-campus classes. Online classes are convenient—and that is the reason that so many of our students choose them—but as you know from teaching them, they are not always easier or less work.

With this said, you may want to explain to students how much work they can expect to do for the course each week. Some may not realize that reading assigned chapters, reading discussion postings, responding to discussion postings, taking quizzes, and completing written assignments will take hours to complete.

Giving them a realistic picture of how much time they may need to devote to completing online work will help them prepare adequately, avoiding the "oops! I bet I can knock this work out 30 minutes before it is due" mentality. You may also find that there are fewer complaints about how much work your class is compared to "[fill-in-the-blank]."

Remind students that they spend 3 hours in class a week as well as 6-9 hours preparing outside of class when taking an on-campus course. Thus, they will be spending 9-12 hours—at least—a week on ONE online class. A good portion of that time will be reading the textbook, reviewing their notes, and exploring learning objects or links. Considerable time, too, will be spent completing writing assignments as students ponder questions, construct answers, and review their work.

It is easy to assign too much or too little work during the week. Believe me, I have explored each side of this spectrum, and I am still trying to figure out what is the right balance that provides them

with a relevant experience that is challenging, but not mind-numbing. Here are a few ideas that I have used in classes:

- Next to each assignment that you provide for the week, include an estimated time of completion. Remember that it doesn't take as long for you to read a chapter—students will need a little more time. Include time for students to take and review notes.
- Ask informally on the discussion board or through email how much time students are spending on your course.
- Administer a survey (let students know that is an anonymous way to gather information) regarding how much time is being spent on different assignments and how satisfied students are with their work and effort. Be prepared for honest answers.
- See the information on the My Progress tool in the May 2005 issue that is archived at the following link: http://www.pulaskitech.edu/online_courses/instructor_information.asp. Create an assignment around week 4 or 5 that asks students to evaluate their progress by reviewing the My Progress and My Grades tools. In the assignment, ask them how much time they are spending on the class and have them make connections between time spent and their grades.

Example 1.1

Assignment	Due Date	Estimated Time of Completion
Read Chapter 7 (40 pages)	January 23	2-3 hours with note-taking
Take practice quizzes for Chapter 7 on textbook website	Before January 25	1 hour
Take Chapter 7 Quiz (10 MC questions)	January 25	10 minutes to take the exam; study for 20 minutes before by reviewing notes (30 minutes total)
Writing Assignment #2 (2 pages)	January 27	1-2 hours to research topic; 2-3 hours to develop opinion, write, revise, and edit short paper (3-5 hours total)
Discussion Postings (3)	January 28	30 minutes to read all postings for the week; 30 minutes to reflect on discussion posting topics; 30 minutes to type and post 3 times (1.5 hours total)
Total Time: 9 hours estimated		

Newsletter Archives

You can check out back issues of the Teaching Online Tips newsletter at the Pulaski Tech website. Go to www.pulaskitech.edu and then click on the Faculty & Staff button. Then, click on the Online Instructor Information link. Or you can go directly to

http://www.pulaskitech.edu/online_courses/instructor_information.asp

FRIENDLY REMINDER:

You may combine sections after January 23. If you would like Danny to combine your sections for you, please email him in the WebCT Faculty Helpdesk.

Checklist for the Beginning of the Semester

- Add welcome messages in upper textblock and on discussion board as students begin to log in.
- Add updated syllabus—check those dates in the course outline.
- Double check dates on calendar and revise if necessary.
- Update dates on assignments and quizzes or hide icons.
- Keep the homepage and course menu easy to navigate and easy to read (Remember that some students have visual impairments that make certain color combinations and animated icons difficult to read or distracting.).
- Track your students each day to make sure all have logged in. Go to Control Panel>Manage Course>Track Students to see who has not logged in.
- Follow up the first week with a friendly email reminder or phone call for stragglers. Email addresses and phone numbers are available on your roster in Campus Connect.

Spotlight On: Assignments

This month's spotlight is on the WebCT tool Assignments.



Glossary Profile:

- Can be added by going to Add Page/Tool and selecting Assignments.
- Provides an easy way for students to retrieve and submit assignments.
- Allows you to release and close assignments at set times.
- Stamps all submissions with a due date.
- Can be set to cut off after the deadline, thereby disallowing late submissions.
- Can be set with a "grace period" that informs students the assignment is "late," but allows them to submit anyway.
- Allows you to upload a graded document that contains corrections and suggestions.
- Allows both you and the student to have access to the original document and the graded one so that you will never lose submitted, graded assignments.

Ideas for Using Assignments:

- If you don't know how this tool would be used, well, then we need to talk...privately. Seriously, you can use this tool for more than just traditional assignments that need to be submitted to you.

- One idea is to use it to provide instructions for an activity that may not need to be uploaded as a file, for example, discussion postings. You would then check the discussion board for completion, and then go back to the Assignments tool to record the grade. However, you would not have a record of the work in the Assignments tool (it would reside on the discussion board), but you could copy and paste it into a document or ask that students both post and upload a copy of the assignment in the Assignments tool. Just depends on how much you want to do!

Upcoming Training

We will be kicking off training for WebCT 6.0 in early February. The training schedule will be varied and intensive. Look for details!

Comments or suggestions for future issues should be emailed to Amy Baldwin (abaldwin@pulaskitech.edu). We are always looking for faculty to share their ideas and best practices. Consider writing for us!