

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FROM AE3 LIGHTNING SYMPOSIUM--ONE WAY THE PANDEMIC IMPROVED MY TEACHING--SPRING 2021**

**Q: For those using group work, how frequently (if at all) have you been rotating groups?**

**A:**

Abby: Not covered at all in my presentation, but I do not rotate teams which are used for 5 lab assignments and the semester long project. I do not rotate because I am trying to create connection and feeling of belonging. I do use CATME to assign teams (not isolating women, mixing majors, aligning schedules and commitment to course) and for a midterm and final peer evaluation.

Katie: We don't rotate either. We preassigned groups first by making sure women were not alone in a group, and otherwise randomly. Students seemed to want to continue working with the same people each week, and I think this continuity fosters a sense of community.

**Q: There has been a lot of concern about cheating in the online environment. How do different learning environments affect this?**

**A:**

Abby: cheating will happen, no matter what. My ways to detect and deal with have not shifted that much - I am focused on assessment that gets at understanding and application of knowledge rather than just recitation and regurgitation - that seems more difficult for students to "cheat" at (plus being a more desirable learning outcome in many instances). We have not had significant cheating issues thus far, although I do suspect that my questions on assessments like quizzes and exams will make their way into study banks now, whereas before I was able to limit access to them outside of in the physical classroom or office. But, this is not the majority of where their grade comes from in my classes and I have not had to offer a class for a second time (yet...), so I have not spent a lot of time dealing with it up to now.

Katie: We haven't had significant issues with cheating in our labs. I think a large part of this is that we ask students to focus on documenting their process, and we evaluate them on evidence of the process - their grade is not tied to getting some kind of "correct result" but rather to designing and carrying out their own experiments carefully and thoughtfully. A more salient form of cheating we deal with is one or two group members logging in, turning off their cameras and never saying or doing anything while the rest of the group does all the work, and then getting their names on the group report to get credit anyway.

**Q: Have you observed any “new cheating” behavior? If so, how did you address it?**

**A:**

Abby: I have not personally observed new cheating behavior per se - but I have seen students being a bit more bold in what they request and state regarding what they think is fair or needed in terms of evaluation (usually requesting less assignments, more lenient grading or significant accommodations - not DRES-related accommodations, just changes based on their personal circumstances). I try to approach these sorts of requests consistently and fairly - if the work really is too much or the choice I made is not working, change it and thank them for communicating to me. Else (and more commonly), I explain the reasoning behind what I chose, what I am trying to ensure they leave the course having learned and why it is important and then kindly reiterate that these are the expectations in this course.

Katie: Much like Abby, I'm seeing a lot more requests based on personal circumstances, which on the one hand makes me have to set some clear boundaries, but is also making me think about how we can be more flexible with our students and their needs when we enter the after times. Otherwise the group collaboration issues we're seeing are the ones that have always been there, but they are just amplified by the online setting. We're hoping the group contracts and mid-semester reflection will give students more agency to talk to their group members about these issues and feel safe letting their instructor know there's a problem so it can be addressed.

**Q: What challenges do you anticipate in continuing the instructional strategies you shared today as we move into the Fall 2021 semester with different/mixed instructional modalities (e.g. in-person and remote synchronous participation, split class attendance, etc.)**

**A:**

Katie: I think we'll need to really double down on attention to group dynamics in collaborative activities. In particular, with split attendance we will need to lean on interdependence and agreeing on expectations to make sure all students are able to be part of what is happening even if they can't be in the classroom. I also think that instructor training is going to be crucial to make sure all our TAs have a model for how to interact across multiple modes of communication, and that they aren't overwhelmed in the process.

Abby: I think having mixed modalities, particularly that differ across classes, creates a lot of demands for students; they may have increased ambiguity in what exactly they are supposed to do for that specific class and increased workload as they try to figure it out (that articulation work I referred to in my talk). On top of it, I think we (as educators) may go a little bit overboard - creating lots of lectures for them to watch outside of class time, plus readings, plus assignments, plus plus plus - all with good intentions as we try to

ensure they get the excellent education they signed up for. But, this intention is what creates the course and a half Chrys mentioned, and is a recipe for even more stress and burnout among students. I do not think it is sustainable. The other issue - perhaps not the focus here - is what Katie starts to get at with overwhelming the TAs. Having to create so many modalities, pivot and switch between modalities and engage across so many modes is creating a lot of workload for the educators across role classification (TA, instructor, faculty, whatever). If the organization (at any level: department, college or university) does not counteract these demands, perhaps with additional supports if unable to eliminate them, I predict that we will see rising levels of stress and burnout in educators (with accompanying negative outcomes for both individuals - mostly health related - **and** organization - including errors, decreased performance and even turnover).

**Q: What are the most important lessons your students have taught you through their participation in your classes during the pandemic? How will you use what you have learned moving ahead?**

**A:**

Abby: I have really enjoyed thinking about the work of a student and how I can design (at least in my classes) their work system based on the theory and methods that I use in my research. I will keep following that line of thinking and approach to better support them. Another big lesson that keeps getting reinforced is that students are people too - some with caregiving responsibilities, family responsibilities, etc. beyond “just” being a student. This impacts how they can engage with the class and designing the course to help these students will make the class better for everyone.

Katie: I’ve been blown away by how my students and I have been able to co-create our community learning space online. In particular, when I’m lecturing (which I didn’t discuss in my talk) the Zoom chat brings this strange intimacy where we encourage each other, jokes are made, questions can be asked without the burden of feeling like the class is being interrupted, etc. This goes way beyond what think-pair-share and active learning buys us in in-person instruction, and I’m really wondering how we can bring this co-construction of the learning space back into physical lecture spaces.