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Pedagogicon Conference Proceedings

2019

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## Situating Transparency in Learning & Teaching: Introduction to the 2019 Proceedings

Randi Polk

*Eastern Kentucky University, [randi.polk@eku.edu](mailto:randi.polk@eku.edu)*

Shirley P. O'Brien

*Eastern Kentucky University, [shirley.obrien@eku.edu](mailto:shirley.obrien@eku.edu)*

Russell Carpenter

*Eastern Kentucky University, [russell.carpenter@eku.edu](mailto:russell.carpenter@eku.edu)*

Leslie Williams

*Eastern Kentucky University, [leslie\\_williams@mymail.eku.edu](mailto:leslie_williams@mymail.eku.edu)*

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Polk, Randi; O'Brien, Shirley P.; Carpenter, Russell; and Williams, Leslie, "Situating Transparency in Learning & Teaching: Introduction to the 2019 Proceedings" (2020). *Pedagogicon Conference Proceedings*. 1. <https://encompass.eku.edu/pedagogicon/2019/frontmatter/1>

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# 2019 Pedagogicon Proceedings

## Situating Transparency in Learning & Teaching: Introduction to the 2019 Proceedings

**Randi Polk, Shirley O'Brien, Russell Carpenter, and Leslie Williams**

Eastern Kentucky University University

### Introduction

The 2019 Pedagogicon adopted Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) as its theme for the annual conference meeting. Through the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCT&L), the Instructional Design Center (IDC), and insights from faculty from the Transparency in the spring 2019 TILT pilot representing colleges and departments across the university, Eastern Kentucky University strives to inform instructors about the TILT framework and help faculty implement it in their courses. During the 2018-19 academic year, faculty from units across campus met to learn more about TILT, how to redesign assignments, and make sure students knew what they were learning and why it mattered. While this might seem basic, Mary-Ann Winkelmes founder of the TILT initiative, knows that the question of why students are learning what they are, and how it fits into the big picture is not always answered--at least not clearly enough to reach the learner.

Since its inception in the 2009-10 academic year at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, TILT has involved twenty-five thousand students in hundreds of courses at forty institutions in seven countries. This impact is huge considering that TILT pedagogy often involves small changes to our teaching. Truly, small changes can create an enormous benefit for students and lead to inclusiveness. The TILT project focuses on two things: 1) Promoting students' conscious understanding of how they learn; and 2) Enabling faculty to gather, share and promptly benefit from current data about students' learning by coordinating their efforts across disciplines, institutions and countries ([tilthighered.com](http://tilthighered.com)). When students understand the assignment, how it will help them learn the content for a course, and realize its usefulness, the path to learning is a clear one.

In 2014-15, the TILT project partnered with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to help create equitable opportunities for all college students to succeed. Equal access is important for all institutions of higher learning, but particularly for those with large numbers of underrepresented, first generation, or low income students. When we, as instructors, focus on the how and why of learning

and keep our audience in mind to create equitable opportunities, research shows greater retention and success among students. Retention and time to graduation are more important as public universities feel the number crunch and students assume a financial burden to pay for their education. Thus, TILT is one way to help clarify assignments, make learning meaningful and equitable, and can also help with retention efforts. Because we can see real benefit from small changes to our teaching, it is easy to get excited about the TILT framework.

TILT was already a topic of conversation at Eastern Kentucky University, so bringing in presenters with this shared interest made for an invigorating academic experience. We had the pleasure of working with Mary-Ann Winkelmes during the pre-conference plenary and her sincere effort to help us help students was the perfect way to begin our time sharing tips and tricks for implementing TILT. In *Small Teaching*, James Lang also recognizes the need for small and incremental approaches that can be quite powerful for learners and shows how implementing small changes can be powerful and manageable for busy instructors.

In the articles that follow, readers will gain insights into strategies that have worked to benefit students using the TILT framework and other small changes. TILT, paired with other examples of incremental change can be powerful for students. James Lang's *Small Teaching* also addresses how busy instructors are and that improving student learning does not always require a total overhaul. Instead, we can change the learning experience with small steps for big results. The contributors to this volume provide some ideas for such implementations.

## **Guiding and Grading**

The section *Guiding and Grading* presents strategies for faculty to consider in making small changes within academic courses to promote student learning. Amanda Joyce discusses the challenges of the grading process for both faculty and students. In her piece "Tips and Tricks for Grading and Providing Effective and Efficient Feedback in Writing Intensive Courses", Joyce explores ideas for fostering efficient and effective feedback to promote critical thinking within the writing process. She elaborates on best practice with rubrics, spaced deadlines and use of audio and video feedback for students. Amanda Joyce and Jana Hackathorn address student awareness about their learning capabilities in "“LOL, No, I Didn't Read”": Students' Difficulties with Choosing Strategies for Success." They provide strategies to enhance engagement, thus breaking negative self-perceptions about learning within college courses. Dominic Ashby presents compelling data about the use of grade contracts and student perceptions in "A Contract for Success: Increasing Student Engagement and Confidence through Grade Contracts." The use of grade contracts fit well within TILT, adding clarity in course expectations. The use of backward design reinforces Sonja Yow's approach to TILT in "Using a Balanced Formative and Summative Assessment Model of Teaching to Improve Student Learning Outcomes". Her presentation

of deliberate use of formative assessment with appropriate student challenges links well to goal-based learning. Kathleen Fischer, Tarin Williams, and Joseph Hannigan explore the use of deliberate practice to enhance critical thinking in simulated cases in application of prescription writing in “Educators Guiding Students With Different Cognitive Levels Through Complex Assignments at Any Educative Level.” Their example fosters discussion about the use of case study methodology in professional education. The next article in this section by Janice Poston, Shawn Apostel, and Keith Richardson reviews technological options in “Using Microsoft Teams to Enhance Engagement and Learning with Any Class: It’s Fun and Easy”. They discuss the universality of Microsoft Teams across platforms and devices to promote student engagement in blended and online courses, guiding transparency in engagement. Finally, in “Service-Learning: Everyone Deserves to Play!,” Jessica Mason and Karen Dishman examine service-learning in Occupational Therapy courses.

### **Attract, Assess, Retain**

In this section of the 2019 Proceedings, authors focus perspective for attracting, assessing, and retaining students. Breck Harris leads off with “Four Teaching Strategies for Creating Student Engagement and Learning,” focusing on evidence-based practices for teaching and learning. Next, Heather Fox, Brianna Parsons, Alesha Alexander, Sarah King, Cole Burgin, and Kristine Wertz in “Making Investments Transparent (in English Education)” explore their process for transparently designing meaningful learning experiences. Casey Humphrey, Karina Christopher, and Cassie Ginn, authors of “Interprofessional Education: A Team Approach in the Classroom,” explore ways that they have employed team approaches to enhance teaching and learning. In “Students’ Perspectives and Engagement Transforming Newly Acquired Knowledge to Long Term Memory Utilizing the Deliberate Practice Framework,” Kathleen Mae Fischer, Tarin Thomas Williams, and Joseph David Hannigan explore the use of student perspectives, a valuable approach for retaining students. Finally, Joy Santee, in “Leveraging Program-Level Transparency as a Communication Strategy for Sustainability through Recruitment and Retention,” explores the relationship between transparency within the context of student retention.

### **Creating Transparent Experiences**

In Creating Transparent Experiences, readers will find a variety of ways to implement new ideas for active learning and transparent experiences. Gay Sweely begins this section with “Storytelling, Spoon-Feeding, and Traditions: Teaching Art History Better.” Deep learning is achieved by active learning in a virtual lab described by Randall Joyce, Brandon Dixon, and Abdul Yarali in their piece entitled “Creating a Deep Learning Environment in a Virtual Lab for Cyber Security” showing the need for certain skills to detect and mitigate data breaches. Next, Cynthia Dickerson, Rachel M. Hopp, and Jefferey Masters examine the integration of active-learning exercises.

Ideas for active learning with transferable skills abound in “Developing Active Learning Exercises for Any Content” by Cynthia Dickerson, Rachel Hopp, and Jeffrey Masters. In “Use of Visual Imagery as an Alternative to Traditional Written Assignments,” Geela Spira suggests that feedback videos and other visual presentations are most attractive to Millennials and Gen-X students. Finally, Krista M. Kimmel, Jennifer L. Fairchild, and John Strada the concept of operational transparency in basic communication courses, transferable concepts at a program level.

## **Applications**

The articles contained in the 2019 Proceedings are intended to represent transferable teaching and learning strategies that are applicable in a variety of academic contexts. They are, individually and as a whole, approaches that the authors have found successful in their own environments. As readers peruse these articles, the editors recommend:

- Considering how, and in what ways, the strategies might be useful in their own teaching contexts;
- Determine possible approaches for assessing the extent to which these strategies were successful in the classroom; and
- Integrate small changes as Lang suggests to promote continued enhancement of teaching.