

UNLV Best Teaching Practices Expo

Thursday, January 19, 2017

Student Union Ballroom A

12:00 - 1:30 pm

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The teaching practice and the need it addresses:

Large Class (~100) Splitting to Reduce Class Size

It is well recognized that smaller classes lead to improved student outcomes. However, instructor resources are limited, particularly for first year introductory classes. To address this, for Fall 2016 we tried a split class approach which splits the class (~100) into two sections (~50 each). Each section still meets twice a week, however the instructor provides a lecture to one section and the other section is provided an in-class exercise lead by a Teaching Assistant (TA). The goal is to reduce students feeling “lost in the heard” due to large classes in overly large lecture halls and limited instructor-student interaction.

The trade-offs include reduced face-to-face instructor time vs higher quality interaction. This also allows the use of regular class rooms, instead of the overly large lecture halls and increases room scheduling options.

Evidence this practice benefits UNLV students:

Results were generally positive and monitored in two areas, objective and subjective. Objectively, test scores for test1, test2, and the final exam were slightly higher (~5%). Overall class results, as compared to previous fall semester:

	Passing (A, B, C)	Non-Passing (C-, D, F, W)
Not-Split, Fall 15	73.19%	26.8%
Split, Fall 2016	81.44%	18.55%

Subject results include positive feedback from multiple guest lectures, even though that meant doing the guest lecture twice.

Resources and where to find them:

The practice does require a dedicated, knowledgeable TA support person who is able to independently lead in-class exercises. No other external resources are required.

How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice:

The practice is repeatable for other instructors and other disciplines with large classes, meeting twice a week, that could support meaningful in-class activity sessions.