PRESENTER'S NOTES

Mary-Ann Winkelmes

These notes correspond to the TILT Higher Ed slides shared with faculty developers at:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0Bx9gwh3MRThOWHBPLWg3azB5U0k?usp=sharing

The most recent copy of the TILT Higher Ed slides is available at:
https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency/tilt-higher-ed-examples-and-resources

slide 7	Black, Hispanic, Native American and Pacific Islander students are just about half as likely to complete a four-year college degree as their White and Asian classmates (U.S. Department of Education January 2014). Completion rates for low-income students lag far behind those of students whose family incomes are above the bottom quartile (Tough 2014). And first generation college students are 51% less likely to graduate in four years than students whose parents completed college (Ishtani 2006).
slide 8	This table summarizes responses to 2 questions I ask faculty when I travel to campuses across the country: list some common challenges to students' successful completion of assignments in your courses list some strategies you have found effective in helping students to complete assignments in your course successfully
slide 12	One-page research summary on page 10 of your handout contains the description I'm providing you here. Other researchers have connected increased confidence and increased belonging with higher grades and increased persistence. For example, ethnically underrepresented (African-American) first-year college students who completed an exercise that aimed to increase their feelings of social belonging earned higher GPAs in the next three years, reduced the racial achievement gap, reduced their feelings of self-doubt, increased their confidence and were more likely to be in the top 25% of their college class **(Walton Walton, Gregory M., and Geoffrey L. Cohen. 2011**. "A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students." *Science 331 (6023):* pp. 1447-1451. **).** In addition, struggling college students increased their test scores after endorsing the belief that intelligence is not fixed but rather malleable. One year later, these students were 80% less likely to drop out of college, and their GPAs continued increasing (**Aronson, J., C. Fried, and C. Good.** 2002. "Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students by Shaping Theories of Intelligence." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 38: 113–125.**).** For both white and African American first-year college students, sense of belonging can indirectly increase students' persistence behaviors **(Hausmann,**

	Leslie R. M., Feifei Ye, Janet Ward Schofield and Rochelle L Woods. 2009. "Sense of Belonging and Persistence in White and African American First-Year Students. Research in Higher Education 50, 7: 649-669.**). Hart Research Associates. 2015.** *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success*. Washington, DC: AAC&U. ____ ____. 2013. *It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*. Washington, DC: AAC&U.
slide 24	Discussion prompt for Sample A: The purpose is hard to find. What skills will the student practice? What knowledge will the student gain from doing this assignment? How are those skills and that knowledge going to be valuable for students beyond the context of this assignment? The task is easy to locate. What portion of the assignment is devoted to the task? (100% -- like a lot of assignments) How much work would it take to add purpose and criteria statements? Discuss the criteria (if time allows): pros and cons on the spectrum from simple checklist <----------> detailed rubric. How much information is too much for intro students? Advanced students?
slide 25	Discussion prompt for Sample B: Purpose: What skills with the student practice? How could you explain the value of these skills in a way that's accessible and relevant to math majors and non-majors alike? How might that affect students' motivation and metacognition when they work on this assignment?
slide 26	Discussion prompt for Sample C: Discuss the criteria. What are pros and cons on the spectrum from simple checklist <----------> detailed rubric. How much detail is needed in a criteria statement for a low-stakes in-class activity vs a high-stakes take-home assignment? What quantity of information about criteria is helpful vs. overwhelming?
slide 27	This assignment was transparent enough to achieve the results we observed in our study (elevated academic confidence, belonging and awareness of skill-building reported by students). Can you improve upon the purpose statement to make it more relevant/accessible/motivating to non-science majors? How might you improve the criteria statement? How detailed should the criteria statement be for an in-class activity vs a take-home assignment?

Frequently Asked Questions (from faculty)

Will students still benefit if my transparent assignments don't follow the Transparent Assignment Template exactly?

Yes! The Template is the visual artifact from communications between teachers and students in our study. We used it as a guide to help teachers and students think together

— either online or in the classroom — about the purposes, tasks and criteria for academic work. Use it as a guide. As long as your communication with students results in their clear understanding of the purposes, tasks and criteria for their work before they start working, you can expect to see the kind of learning benefits we found in our study.

What if I don't want to give students information about how to do the work before they do it? What if my goal is for the students to figure out how to do it on their own?

Some faculty in our studies wanted to avoid limiting students' creativity by providing recommended procedures for approaching or completing the work. Faculty in Performing Arts and Engineering disciplines, for example, may sometimes want to students to invent new processes and methods. In such cases, faculty can preserve students' confidence and sense of belonging by adapting the way they explain the purpose of the assignment. For example: "The purpose of this assignment is for you to struggle and feel confused while you invent your own process and methods for addressing the problem…"

How will I know if I'm offering transparent instruction exactly like teachers in your study did?

If you incorporate transparent instruction at your own discretion, then you'll be doing what the teachers in our study did. We asked teachers to offer transparency around the purposes, tasks and criteria for academic work in their courses in their own way at their own discretion. We offered a Transparent Assignment Template and a small amount of training via onsite and online workshops. We intentionally avoided rigid protocols for how to adopt transparency in your instruction for two main reasons: 1) we expected variation; and 2) we wanted to demonstrate what teachers in a variety of higher education contexts around the country could expect if they adopted Transparent Assignment Design at their own discretion with the goal of improving students' learning and increasing equitable opportunities for all students to succeed.

Is there variation in the effectiveness of Transparent Assignment Design across disciplines or levels of expertise? For example, do introductory-level courses see greater benefits? Do STEM students and Humanities students experience similar benefits?

Transparent instruction seems to benefit students across the disciplines and at all levels of expertise. There are, of course, some variations and our preliminary work on that can be viewed. But the variations weren't always what we expected. For example, students in STEM courses felt the courses helped them improve their writing skills significantly, while students in large courses felt strongly that their instructors valued them and their interests. We expected some of the greatest potential long-term benefits (on retention and graduate rates) would come from offering Transparent Assignment Design in introductory and intermediate-level courses, so we focused our main efforts there first. We continue to test other ways to offer transparent instruction.

Is there live online help or a self-guided online tutorial I can use?

A self-guided draft checklist you can help us to test, a checklist developed at the University of Houston, Downtown and a tool that measures the amount of transparency in an assignment.

Please send your own examples and suggestion to mary-ann.winkelmes@unlv.edu. Additional online resources will soon be offered through the following organizations:

- Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)
- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)
- Association of College and University Educators (ACUE).

What other ways can I offer transparent instruction, in addition to assignment design?

We are testing the impact of various ways of offering transparent instruction. We focused heavily on Transparent Assignment Design at the introductory and intermediate college levels, because we expected that would have the biggest possible benefit on college students' retention and graduation rates, and their continued success in careers and/or post-graduate study. Read about some preliminary findings about the impact of other types of transparent instruction that we are testing.

I'm interested in joining TILT Higher Ed and contributing to your research on equitable opportunities for all college students' success.

We welcome your participation. There are several ways to get involved:

1. Sign up to join the project as an individual instructor, choose to join the control group or the intervention group, and receive a confidential instructor's report on your students' learning;
2. Organize a group of faculty/instructors from your institution who share a common institutional goal, and join TILT Higher Ed as a team. Contact mary-ann.winkelmes@unlv.edu.
3. Inquire about joining our team of researchers if you'd like to help us study the data we are gathering, and contribute to co-publications. Contact mary-ann.winkelmes@unlv.edu.

Please contact Mary-Ann Winkelmes (mary-ann.winkelmes@unlv.edu) with additional questions or suggestions.