RESEARCH-BASED ASSIGNMENTS
THAT INSPIRE UNLV STUDENTS’ LEARNING

MARY-ANN WINKELMES
COORDINATOR, INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH
Overview

Purpose (benefits):

Knowledge: - UNLV faculty strategies
  - research findings: students’ learning
  - implications for assignment design

Skills: apply research findings to assignment design

Task (what we do; how we do it):
  – (me) Review research findings
  – (you and IDR providers) apply findings to your own course activities, assignments

Criteria (how well are we doing?) Participants will leave w/
  - understanding of state of research,
  - draft assignment for one of their courses,
  - concise set of strategies for designing assignments/projects that inspire UNLV students’ learning
  - plan for sequencing activities in a semester.
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<td>Explicate assignments’ purpose, rationale Engage students in applying your criteria (6) to develop ability / belonging</td>
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<td>Yeager, Walton</td>
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### UNLV Instructors’ Responses: Challenges and Successes

<table>
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<th>Challenges and Barriers</th>
<th>Successes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort applying new knowledge</td>
<td>• Apply class concepts to new situations (real-world) during class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of critical thinking skills</td>
<td>• In class (with peers) practice in higher order thinking, especially evaluating reliability of info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered focus Procrastination</td>
<td>• Portfolios enhance students’ awareness of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Small, frequent assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Structured, relevant assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staged assgts connect w/exams, projects, world</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Varied multimedia projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of models Ambiguous rubrics / success standards</td>
<td>• Explicit rubrics, annotated examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate time for prof’s quality feedback</td>
<td>• Peer feedback (structured) in/out of class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation: Individual, and teams with full participation</td>
<td>• Define assignment’s contribution to students’ learning;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Choice of topic leads to ownership/motivation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Variety and choice of format offers equitable opportunities to excel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNLV Student Progression

Over 1/5 of 1st year class stops (700+ students)

![Student Progression Graph]

- Entering Freshmen: 3000 students, 78% progression rate
- 24 Credits: 2500 students, 74% progression rate
- 60 Credits: 1500 students, 64% progression rate
- 75 Credits: 900 students, 91% progression rate
- Graduating Cohort
UNLV Students’ Views on Learning

Transparency Project Findings (To join the Transparency Project or find out more, see: http://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning)

1st-year and intro-level students: below moderate confidence in ability to succeed

(N = 2719)

As a result of taking this course:

17) are you more or less confident about your ability to succeed in school,

18) are you more or less confident about your ability to succeed in this field, …?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>17 (“School”)</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 (“Field”)</td>
<td>3.68</td>
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</table>
UNLV Students’ Views on Learning

Transparency Project Findings

1st-year and intro-level students: moderate understanding of successful work

23) How well do you understand what constitutes successful work in this course?

2) How accurately does your submitted work for the course … reflect your understanding of the course content?

(N = 2719)
UNLV Students’ Views on Learning
Transparency Project Findings

1st-year and intro-level students: below moderate: recognize when you need help

As a result of taking this course:

19) are you better or worse at recognizing when you need help with your academic work, …?

Mean Response (N = 2726)

- MORE
- LESS

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

19 ("Help") Question

Mean Response: 3.83
UNLV Students’ Views on Learning

Transparency Project Findings

1st-year and intro-level students: below moderate help with communication skills

Mean Response

How much has this course helped you in:

4) writing effectively?

5) communicating your ideas effectively in your spoken statements?

6) collaborating effectively with others?
Students’ Views on Learning (national study)

Transparency Project Findings

Transparent methods benefit students who are unfamiliar with college success strategies by explicating learning/teaching processes. Transparent methods benefit high-performing students by affirming their learning strategies.

**Transparent Assignment Design** benefits students at intro level in all disciplines:
- felt valued as student
- recognize when need help
- confidence to succeed
- perceived content mastery
- perceived skills development (UULOs)

Areas where UNLV students lack confidence

To join the Transparency Project or find out more, see:
[http://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning](http://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning)
How would I design a Transparent Assignment?

Transparent Assignment Template

• Purpose (2, 6)
  • Skills
  • Knowledge

• Task (2)

• Criteria for success (3, 4)

(numbers refer to sections in the EXAMPLES handout)
When would I use a Transparent activity or assignment?

When the concept is crucial for students to understand.

Passive Learning | Active Learning

- Receiving information and ideas
- EXPERIENCES
  - Doing
  - Observing
- REFLECTION
  - On what / how one is learning;
  - Alone, w/others

Dee Fink, Significant Learning Experiences, 2003
Sample Assignments

(Sample A in “Teaching UNLV Students” handout, p. 4)

Purpose

- Intellectual **Skills** (including UULOs) students practice
- Content **Knowledge** (including UULOs) students gain

Task

- What to do; How to do it

Criteria

- Characteristics of successful work (Am I on the right track? Will I earn a good grade?
- Examples of successful work (annotated)

Strategies (Session Handout p. 2)

- Which research-based methods are used?
- Which time-savers/best practices could be used?
Sample Assignments (table groups) (B or C)
(Sample B or C in “Teaching UNLV Students” handout, p. 5-6)

Purpose
- Intellectual Skills (including UULOs) students practice
- Content Knowledge (including UULOs) students gain

Task
- What to do; How to do it

Criteria
- Characteristics of successful work (Am I on the right track? Will I earn a good grade?)
- Examples of successful work (annotated)

Strategies (see EXAMPLES handout)
- Which research-based methods are used?
- Which time-savers/best practices could be used?
Sample Assignments (Sample D)
(Sample D in “Teaching UNLV Students” handout, p. 7)

Purpose
• Intellectual **Skills** (including UULOs) students practice
• Content **Knowledge** (including UULOs) students gain

Task
• What to do; How to do it

Criteria
• Characteristics of successful work (Am I on the right track? Will I earn a good grade?)
• Examples of successful work (annotated)

Strategies
• Which research-based methods are used?
• Which time-savers/best practices could be used?
Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to gain a greater understanding of a prospective academic discipline and/or career field.

Skills: As a result of completing this assignment, you will identify information necessary to make an informed decision regarding your academic and/or career path, employ basic qualitative research methods to collect and critically evaluate information from a principal source, and practice written and spoken communication as a tool for exploring possible academic and/or career options.

Knowledge: This assignment will give you knowledge of the process of informational interviewing, a tool for exploring various careers that can be used throughout your lifetime.

Task: In order to complete this assignment, (steps from p. 8)

Criteria for Success: A successful assignment will have the following characteristics:

A participant who is well qualified and relevant to your area of interest.
Interview questions that are focused and purposeful.
A concise, articulate reflection essay that covers all the key and relevant points.
A thorough, typed transcript that includes at least 5 of the questions and answers.
A critical evaluation of the information collected and how it relates to your choice of major and/or career.
A well-formatted essay that meets the page requirement, includes an introduction, a body and a conclusion, is typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, MLA style, including in-text citations and a reference/works cited page.
Submit the transcript and reflection essay via WebCampus by midnight on the due date.
Late assignments will not be accepted.
Your Assignments  (table groups; pairs)

Purpose
• Intellectual **Skills** (including UULOs) students practice
• Content **Knowledge** (including UULOs) students gain

Task
• What to do; How to do it

Criteria
• Characteristics of successful work (Am I on the right track?  Will I earn a good grade?)
• Examples of successful work (annotated)

Strategies (**EXAMPLES** handout)
• Which research-based methods are used?
• Which time-savers/best practices could be used?
Make Your Assignments Transparent
(EXAMPLES, p. 12) (table groups; pairs)

Purpose
• Intellectual **Skills** (including UULOs) students practice
• Content **Knowledge** (including UULOs) students gain

Task
• What to do; How to do it

Criteria
• Characteristics of successful work (Am I on the right track? Will I earn a good grade?)
• Examples of successful work (annotated)

Strategies (EXAMPLES handout)
• Which research-based methods are used?
• Which time-savers/best practices could be used?
Review: How did we do?

Purpose (benefits):

Knowledge: - UNLV faculty strategies
- research findings: students’ learning
- implications for assignment design

Skills: apply research findings to assignment design

Task (what we do; how we do it):

- (me) Review research findings
- (you and IDR providers) apply findings to your own course activities, assignments

Criteria Participants will leave w/

- understanding of state of research,
- draft assignment for one of their courses,
- concise set of strategies for designing assignments/projects that inspire UNLV students’ learning.
Break

• 5 min
Research-Based Assignments That Inspire UNLV Students’ Learning

Part 2

Mary-Ann Winkelmes
Coordinator, Instructional Development and Research

Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
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Transparent methods benefit students who are unfamiliar with college success strategies by explicating learning/teaching processes. Transparent methods benefit high-performing students by affirming their learning strategies.

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Areas where UNLV students lack confidence

To join the Transparency Project or find out more, see: http://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning)
Transparent Assignment Template

- **Purpose** Develop a sequence for course activities, assignmts
  - Skills
  - Knowledge

- **Task** Work with colleagues on sequence; experience activities

- **Criteria for success**
  Leave with a draft sequence, colleagues’ insights
When to include an activity or assignment?

When the concept is crucial for students to understand

Passive Learning | Active Learning

- Receiving information and ideas
- EXPERIENCES
  - Doing
  - Observing
- REFLECTION
  - On what / how one is learning;
  - Alone, w/others

Dee Fink, Significant Learning Experiences, 2003
What does that look like in a whole course?

| TASK       | DATE  | Use of Information Technology | Communication Abilities Oral and/or Written | Understanding Group and Individual Dynamics | Multicultural Understanding | *Analytic Skills* | Analysis of Domestic and Global Economies of Organizations | *Ethical Understanding and Reasoning Skills* | *Research, Locating and Selecting Useful Information and Resources* | Teamwork: Ability to Collaborate Successfully with Others | *Leadership: Ability to Lead, Gather, Coach and Allow Others to Lead* | Assessing Professional, Ethical and Legal Responsibilities in Organizations and Society | #Evaluation, Assessing Resources and Ideas | Reflective, Self-Evaluative Skills |
|------------|-------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Resume     | 9/1   |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Bonanza    | 9/2 & 9/3 |                             |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Symp       | 9/11  |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Co. Resch  | 9/11  |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Fair       | 9/15  |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Reflect'n  | 9/17  |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Resch Pres |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Interview  |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Codes      |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Reflection |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Presentat'n|       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Presentat'n|       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| 10/30      |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Group proj | 11/6  |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| 11/6       |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| 11/13      |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Group proj | 11/18 |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| 12/4       |       |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Presentat'n| 12/4  |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |
| Presentat'n| 12/11 |                               |                                             |                                             |                             |                   |                                                             |                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                 |

* from AACSB "Assurance of Learning Standards," in *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards...*

# from Benjamin Bloom’s *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*


Shaded assignments are submitted; most of these are graded. Unshaded assignments are activities that happen in and out of class.
How to get there?

In pairs or 3s:

Discuss and define:

Three years after taking your course,

• What essential **knowledge** should students retain?
• What **skills** should students be able to perform?

==================================================================

Record and list in sequence (simplest to most complex

See: Bloom chart (EXAMPLES handout, p. 2); UULOs (“Teaching UNLV Students” handout, p. 2)
Why/how are we doing this assignment?

**Purpose (benefits):**

**Knowledge:**
- ID skills crucial to your course, to others’
- A plan for your course assignments

**Skills:**
- group collaboration
- note aspects to be used/avoided

**Task (what we do; how we do it):**

- Answer questions (5 min)
- List skills (to be used by all of us after) (5 min)

**Criteria (measures of success; what you leave with):**

- ID’d several skills crucial to your course
- A list of skills in sequence (to be used by you and all)
In pairs or 3s at tables:

**Discuss and define** (pairs, 5 mins):

Three years after taking your course,
- What essential **knowledge** should students retain?
- What **skills** should students be able to perform?

========================================

List in sequence (simplest to most complex)

(pairs, 5 mins)

See: Bloom chart (EXAMPLES handout, p. 2); UULOs (“Teaching UNLV Students” handout, p. 2)
# Sequence of Course Assignments

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<tr>
<td><strong>1st:</strong></td>
<td>Prof-response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2d:</strong></td>
<td>peer-response in class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3d:</strong></td>
<td>peer-coached revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th:</strong></td>
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1. Basic tools, data mastery
2. Application, analysis
3. Evaluation

1. Invent, create original contribution
Map Your Assignments in Sequence

For one crucial skill/ concept indicate:

(Sequencing worksheet for Course Activities, “Teaching UNLV Students” handout, p. 12)

– LEARNING GOAL(s) (Bloom (EXAMPLES, p. 2) / UULOs)
– ACTIVITY
– CUES (Bloom (EXAMPLES, p. 2, far right column) / Felder)
– ASSESSMENT FROM
– STAKES (High/Low % of course grade)
– TIME-SAVERS (EXAMPLES/best practices handout)