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About This Issue

Mike A. Christiansen
Utah State University

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About This Issue

*By Michael A. Christiansen, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief
Utah State University*

A Welcome and an Invitation

We enthusiastically welcome you to the second issue of the *Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence*: a peer-reviewed, biannual, cross-disciplinary publication that runs in concert with Utah State University's Empowering Teaching Excellence (ETE) faculty development program.

Despite our journal being helmed by USU, we welcome submissions from any postsecondary institution and discipline. Our objective is to provide a peer-reviewed forum for contributors to publish impactful classroom innovations, where readers can encounter new data, ideas, and methods to facilitate positive and poignant changes to their individual curricula. Above all, we hope to encourage, catalyze, and energize faculty of any experience level to become the best educators they possibly can.

Scope and Theme

Some academic teaching journals focus on large sample size analytics, often drawn from traditional university classrooms with hundreds of student participants. Such approaches are essential for making conclusions with broad statistical significance. However, they may inadvertently ignore advances made in *small* classrooms, where size limitations sometimes allow for only narrower statistical inferences. This consequently prevents published dissemination of potentially groundbreaking and positive small-class developments.

We accordingly aim for a broader scope in this journal, targeting educational innovations in classrooms of all sizes and in any discipline. Officially, our focus

extends to “higher education professionals who engage in the design and practice of instruction, [which] includes tenure and non-tenure track faculty who teach, instructional designers, graduate teaching assistants, graduate instructors, and others” (USU Academic and Instructional Services, n.d.). This purview extends to student engagement; teaching and learning evaluation; instructional design strategies; content, resources, and tools; and technology review and implementation.

Thus, despite showcasing diverse practices across various disciplines, one unifying thread of this issue is the theme of best teaching practices in small rural classrooms, often with nontraditional students. From Barton’s *Reflections* paper (2017) to Wilson’s techniques on promoting critical thinking (2017); from Neel’s work on addressing student failure in gateway courses (2017), to Piotrowski and Robinson’s live videoconference-teaching to multiple geographically-dispersed locations (2017); all the articles herein represent innovations to small, rural university classrooms: an area in which USU faculty stand as stalwart pioneers (Christiansen et al., 2017).

We again welcome you to this second issue of the *Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence* and anticipate that within its pages, you will encounter a wellspring of ideas, innovations, strategies, and techniques that will hopefully encourage, inspire, and invigorate you to reach even greater heights as a teaching professional.

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