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# Coming up: The USU Empowering Teaching Excellence Conference

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Each year Utah State University hosts its annual Empowering Teaching Excellence Conference, designed primarily for instructors across the USU system to energize and inspire teaching innovation for the coming year. Presentations are faculty submitted, faculty led, and focused on teaching techniques that have worked well. Topics and presenters span multiple disciplines and delivery formats, and the proceedings of several presentations will be included in the Spring 2020 issue of the Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence.

Those able to attend the conference on August 14 can find more information on the keynote and other speakers, plus a registration link, at <https://empowerteaching.usu.edu/conference>.

## Session and Upcoming Proceedings Topics:

A sample of topics, intended for inclusion in the Spring 2020 Conference Proceedings issue, include the following:

**Supporting Students: Engagement with Challenging Course Readings.**  
Presented by Jessica Rivera-Mueller.

Many instructors assign course readings to purposefully enlarge students' perspectives. In doing so, though, instructors may face resistance from students who feel that such readings negatively press upon their belief systems and values. "Rhetorical listening," a concept developed by Krista Ratcliffe, however, can be used as a tool to navigate this tension. Because rhetorical listening reveals how our readings of texts are always constructed, it can help students see their readings of texts as

constructed, rather than inevitable. Making this process visible is one approach for supporting students and engagement with challenging course readings.

**An interdisciplinary approach to using rubrics for assessment, grading and feedback.** presented by Anne L. Larson

Rubrics are traditionally defined as specific criteria for grading or scoring academic papers, projects or tests. In addition to streamlining grading, rubrics also provide clear expectations for student work, and structure to evaluations and feedback. Rubrics can also provide instructors with formative assessment of their own teaching practices. In this session, presenters will discuss the purpose and use of rubrics across disciplines. Presenters will provide step-by-step instructions for creating and using rubrics in Canvas, as well as example rubrics used for assignments with peer feedback, student groups, essays, etc.

**Fintech and Finance Teaching: A Monte Carlo Approach,** presented by Danjue Shang

We adopt the concept of Fintech that applies technology to improve financial activities (Schueffel 2018) and apply it in finance teaching. We suggest integrating programming into teaching of abstract or complex concepts. We also suggest teaching programming as a tool to serve students' learning of finance material, instead of as a pure computer science subject. It helps students better process both the class material and the programming technique. We demonstrate this approach in a case study, which also highlights how leveraging the power of programming helps mitigate the persistence of student difficulties in understanding the stochastic nature of statistical concepts.

**Using Video Recordings to Assess Student Performance in Field-Based Experiences and Course Assignments.** presented by Karen Hager Martinez

Panel members from the Department of Special Education will present examples of different ways they use student recorded video to assess student performance. All panel members are using GoReact, an online video feedback platform that allows the instructor to provide feedback on student-submitted videos using time-stamped comments. Examples include having students video record lessons they deliver in Pre-K-12 classrooms, interviews they conduct in family homes, and research

presentations. Panelists will also share strategies for providing feedback directly on the submitted video, and how they use video recordings for peer feedback.

**ZOOM OUT and ZOOM IN: Engaging students in the art of revision.**  
presented by Lianne Wappett

The word "revise" means to "see again" and this is exactly what students need when creating projects, proposals, and writing for public consumption. When creating, students are zoomed in. To revise, students need to learn how to zoom out, then in again. This workshop will cover a technique called ZOOM. It is a four-step process that gives students scaffolding to zoom in and out with specific criteria. Examples will be examined, and attendees will leave with a tool to help students embrace the art of revision.

**Paper. Colored Pencils. One-pagers. A Creative Approach to Student Engagement.** Presented by Denise Stewardson

A one-pager assignment is a student's visual representation of a specific area of study. Through the use of paper and colored pencils, students synthesize their knowledge of a topic by producing a creative one-page response to a reading or question. This activity requires critical thinking and reflection as students express their connections with, and reactions to a given subject. This strategy is used in a university breadth social science course with both small and large populations. The results are imaginative, creative, and insightful!

**Ensuring Student Learning: How to Develop SoTL Projects.** Presented by David Law

Good teachers ask themselves: Are my students really learning what I think they should be learning? Participants in this workshop will learn how to answer this question by developing SoTL (The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) projects. There are five steps in developing SoTL projects: 1) generating the research question, 2) designing the study, 3) collecting the data, 4) analyzing the data and 5) presenting and publishing your SoTL project. After participating in the workshop, participants will be able to apply these five steps to ensure their teaching is resulting in student learning.

**Engaging Students through Inquiry and Project-Based Learning in Interactive Video Conferencing Courses.** Presented by Amy Piotrowski and Marla Robertson

Engaging students in distance courses can be challenging. Presenters will share ideas for incorporating authentic inquiry and project-based learning in these courses to enhance engagement and learning. These experiences can build a learning community and provide real-world applications of course objectives.

**Hitting Pause: Practical Ways to Incorporate Reflective Learning Experiences in Teaching.** Presented by a faculty panel moderated by Marlene Israelsen Graf

The objectives of this oral presentation are to (1) to demonstrate practical ways to effectively incorporate 'pauses' (reflective learning experiences) into teaching and (2) to highlight the powerful benefits of faculty-based Learning Circles. A Learning Circle is a community of faculty who meet on a regular basis to share ideas for active teaching strategies and discuss research and literature focused on effective pedagogy. The presenters have been participating in a Learning Circle at Utah State University since September 2018. As part of a larger group, they spent several months reading and discussing the book, *Hitting Pause*, by Dr. Gail Taylor Rice and worked together to understand and effectively implement 'pauses' in a variety of course types, sizes, and formats. Pauses or 'lecture breaks' are an example of an innovative teaching approach that facilitates student-centered learning, deep processing and meaningful reflection, student engagement, and student empowerment. The presenters will discuss some of their favorite 'pauses' and talk about their biggest challenges for application.

**Scaffold Students as They Learn, Discover, and Engage by Writing in the Disciplines.** Presented by Sylvia Read

This session will demonstrate and allow participants to experience strategies to support student writing in the disciplines. As students learn, discover, and engage with new genres of writing, they benefit from inquiry into the features of the genre, teacher modeling of how to write in the genre, and opportunities to collaborate with other writers. In addition, research supports rubrics that provide specific guidance and feedback.

**Learn how to engage students online: A guide to strategies, content creation and design for successful online classes.** Presented by Antje Graul

Being awarded the Best Online Bachelor's Programs award in 2018, it is a priority to USU to launch high quality online classes that allow students to peruse their education while fitting it around job and family commitments. Thus, more than ever, guidance is needed on how to design an online class successfully. Drawing on the MSLE4545 design, this presentation exemplifies the strategic decisions regarding content creation, Canvas layout and design tools, as well as assessment ideas that increase students' engagement in an online class. Examples include video recordings, expert videos, skype calls, simulations, discussion boards, weekly quizzes and reflective statements.

**International Students in Your Classroom: Understanding Challenges and Providing Support.** Presented by Elena Shvidko

International students often experience challenges in their cultural adaptation and the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Therefore, it is important for instructors to know how to help these students succeed in their academic environment. The purpose of this session is to help instructors understand these student's difficulties and find appropriate support. The presenters will first discuss student's most common academic and cultural challenges and then provide a list of suggestions to university instructors how to help students overcome these challenges. The suggestions include instructor's scaffolding, use of instructional technologies, and referring struggling students to university student services.

**Dialogue vs. Discussion: Creating an Environment of Civility, Mutual Respect, and Acceptance.** Presented by Avery Edenfield

This interdisciplinary session considers how educators can engage students in meaningful dialogue, particularly around controversial topics. Regardless of the discipline, rather than referee of a series of monologues on a topic, educators can use their role to facilitate/mediate dialogue that draws students into impactful conversations. Our goal is help educators to guide students into dialogue with each other as co-equal members of a learning community. And we see facilitation techniques drawn from grassroots community organizing as one way to start having those productive conversations.

**Effective ways of using technology in college language classes.** Presented by Arshavskaya, Ekaterina

Contemporary educators are surrounded by a huge variety of powerful teaching resources. Their success depends on their ability to design effective instruction which can be used by a diverse population of students regardless of what topic or subject they teach. In this session, we will introduce several technologies that were effective in our language classrooms by helping to increase student motivation and facilitate instruction. We will share our experiences of utilizing videos, digital portfolios and online games, and also will provide you with students' feedback on the use of these technology tools in our classrooms. Session attendees will walk away with a clear understanding of benefits of instructional technology in language classrooms and will be offered some tips on how to adapt these tools for the different levels and language skills of their students.

**The Power of "The Ask": A Look at the Effect of Asking Students to Frequently Analyze Course Quality.** Presented by Kristy Bloxham

Online courses can be difficult to improve because we don't get quick feedback from our students. By giving the students the opportunity to give anonymous feedback during the course you can not only improve the course more quickly but you also build student buy-in. By using this formative evaluation survey method you will not only improve the quality of the course more quickly but will likely raise end-of-course evaluations while you are at it.