

FLW: Effective Syllabus Design

REBECCA VANDEVORD: --professor of management and senior associate dean for Academic Affairs. Anna Plemons is a clinical assistant professor in English and director of the class program for the College of Arts and Sciences. And I have been talking about Anna-- last year she has done quite a lot of research on making syllabi readable-- making syllabi that students will read and understand-- and she's done quite a lot of research comparing different styles. And then I had received a link to an article that Tom was interviewed for the WSU Insider, and his research has been in fair classroom practices that disarm the threat of evaluation retaliation.

So one of the things faculty talked a lot about is, well, but if I get really bad evaluations, then what's going to happen? And so Tom's been investigating that area, and he also had some ideas about how you write your syllabus and what needs to be on your syllabus. So I thought it might be nice to bring the two together and talk about how we write good clear syllabi. And I am going to have to sneak out early, so it's not anything personal. Thanks, Tom and Anna, and take it away.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So Anna and I decided I would go first, and I'll give you all sorts of reasons to really want to write great syllabi, and then she'll tell you how. So sound about the plan?

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: That is the promise. We'll see.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So we all would like our courses to be fairly rigorous, to have students learn a lot, to be able to demand a lot of students, and so forth, but we don't always do that. Maybe the people in this room do. Maybe you have some friends or colleagues who maybe don't do that. And the often reason that we don't make our courses rigorous is we think maybe they could be or should be.

AUDIENCE: Evaluations.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So this is evaluations. This is just one thing. So we'll have a lot to say about that in a minute. Any other reasons?

AUDIENCE: Learning outcomes.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Say again.

AUDIENCE: Learning outcomes.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Is you end up with lower outcomes?

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Learning outcomes.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Oh, learning outcomes. So rigor might be having very ambitious learning outcomes, but it could be-- and I have had some faculty, although I don't think that is much as an issue anymore as it was say 5, 10 years ago about not wanting to have any learning outcomes at all on their syllabus. I think that ship's kind of sailed.

AUDIENCE: I find it takes a lot more energy as an instructor to maintain high expectations and rigorous--

AUDIENCE: When you have a large class, a lot of times it's easier to just create for completion than to be rigorous about taking every half point off, or holding high standards, or making sure that you give the kinds of assignments where students can demonstrate rigor.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Yeah, it's more work for us, isn't it? And on the grading side, on the syllabus designing side, particularly learning outcomes, it's more work for us. One of the reasons I've heard is that there's also concern that students won't do the work. So you can lay out this great ambitious agenda for your course and then the students just say, that's too much work, and maybe even complain about that as well. You're much harder than all my other teachers, which often isn't true.

Actually, when we have new instructors come to the Vancouver campus I often have to-- one of the things that at least the Vancouver campus students have learned to do-- I'm not sure about the other campuses-- is if the instructor's brand new is go tell the instructor, you're much harder than all my other instructors. And often, they're not. I look into these things.

Anyway, so those are some of the concerns. Obviously, the concern I want to talk about in more depth is the concern about evaluation retaliation. So if I'm too hard on my students, either by giving them too much work or grading them too stringently, that they will get even with me on the evaluations by giving me lower evaluations. So that seems to be the common wisdom.

Now, the question is, how much do they do that? So one way of measuring how much students tend to do that is by looking at a correlation coefficient. So pretty much I think anybody in the social sciences is familiar with correlation coefficients. Anybody here not familiar with the correlation coefficient? I can explain it otherwise.

So the correlation coefficient-- so let me just get your best guess. What do you think the correlation coefficient is from-- 0.0 to 1.0 is the range here-- is between the grade students think they're getting when they complete these evaluations to the score they actually give you on your evaluations? What's your best guess?

AUDIENCE: 0.72.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Thank you, and very precise. I like that. 0.72. Who else?

AUDIENCE: 0.3.

DR. TOM TRIPP: 0.3.

[INAUDIBLE]

Anybody in Spokane, Tri-Cities or Vancouver want to hazard a guess? Oh, it's fun to play.

[LAUGHS]

You are you are closest. The research shows, and there's a bunch of research on this, that it tends to range between 0.10 and 0.47. So 0.72 is definitely on the high side, but I bet that's probably what most people think. It's definitely higher than say 0.5, but the research shows that it's almost never higher than-- well, all the research shows it's never higher than 0.5. 0.47 was the highest that was found in some studies.

I have measured it, at least in the College of Business, all campuses here at WSU-- that was 10 years ago and we still had it on paper-- and the correlation to College of Business was 0.22. So if you remember from statistics, then the percent of variance that explains, you just square that number, and in the case of the College of Business, it explained between 4% and 5% of the variance. 95% of the variance in evaluations was due to something that had nothing to do with grades.

Even at the high end, 0.47, you square that, you get-- what do you get, about 0.2, 20% of variance of variance? I actually wrote it down here somewhere. It might be enough to be a little bit worried about if you're trying to get ever edge that you can, because we do care about these evaluations. They figure into retention and promotion decisions, but it's actually I think surprisingly small. Nonetheless, people are worried about it.

Now, because faculty are worried about it, faculty respond in a number of interesting ways to this fear, if that's the right word. And so there's one study by Simpson and [? Saga, ?] who took a look at the most popular methods in their study to deal with the fear of evaluation retaliation. And they found in their sample that at least 24% of the sample did one of the following or one or more of the following.

One, grading leniently. Give me more A's than perhaps they would think the students deserve. Lowering the work standards. So giving them less work.

Timing the administration of the evaluations. We can't do this anymore because it's online, but certainly back when this study was done in 2000, when pretty much everything was paper, people would time the administration of the evaluations just to the best possible day. And I've seen people at WSU do this.

So it's like, OK, I've got a two week window. I'll carry them with me everyday to class, and when I can see that the biggest troublemakers in the class aren't there that day, that's the day I give

it. Or maybe you time it after you give back an exam where they did surprisingly well. So these kind of timing issues.

AUDIENCE: Or usually they bring food.

DR. TOM TRIPP: That's another one, inducements. So that is. That's one of the things, bringing food. And another one was, and actually something that WSU has forbidden for a long time, is actually being present during the evaluations.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So these are the kinds of the ways that faculty would deal with it to try and somehow compensate for a buffer against evaluation retaliation. And obviously, these aren't the ideal ways to go and some of them may not even be ethical. So what I want to suggest, and I'll get into a little bit of the research, is that there is another way where you can have them work as hard as you think appropriate for the learning outcomes that you've spelled out and you can give them the grades that they deserve with no evaluation retaliation. Before I get to that, we're talking about workload and grades. Let me give you some other numbers around WSU that you may or may not be aware of.

So anybody know what the average GPA is at WSU? It's 3.2, nearly a B plus. That's great inflation for you. Of course, it's not just WSU. It's everywhere.

There's another study that showed that grade inflation has advanced at about 0.14 per decade. So it's still with us. How many hours a week do you think students spend on their courses?

[LAUGHS]

AUDIENCE: Two to three.

AUDIENCE: 10. The whole week, probably 10.

DR. TOM TRIPP: 10? For one course or for all their courses?

AUDIENCE: Probably all of the courses.

AUDIENCE: I would say one course, yeah.

DR. TOM TRIPP: It might be different at the other campuses. You've got a different student profile there. Tri-Cities, what do you think? We can't hear you. Do you have it muted?

AUDIENCE: Sorry.

DR. TOM TRIPP: I'm sorry, what was that number again?

AUDIENCE: What, per class?

DR. TOM TRIPP: Yeah, how many hours a week do you think the student spend per course at Tri-Cities?

AUDIENCE: Five.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Five I here? Vancouver?

AUDIENCE: Depends on the class, but I would say for some of my more rigorous classes they probably spend six hours just on mine, but other ones a couple. That's it.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Now, there's actually a standard that you've all heard, and I think it might come from NWCCU. Correct me if I'm wrong on that, Rebecca, but I know it's in some accreditation body. That says that students should spend, per say a three credit hour course, 10 hours per week combined studying and attending class. So in real time, they spend about two to three hours outside of class for every hour inside of class.

The interesting thing about that standard when I last looked at it, it doesn't say-- yeah, but for what grade? And it kind of begs that question. Well, a few years back at Vancouver in the business program there, I'd known for a long time we'd been telling students you need to spend 10 hours per class per week, but professors tend to blow hard, at least what the students think. And it's like, is that really true?

So we actually went and did a survey of students and we had them self-report the number of hours that they spent on various courses, and we had them self-identify, and then we went back at the end of the semester and retrieved their actual grades. And what we found was the business students at Vancouver, those who were getting A's were spending nine hours per week studying plus attending class, and those who were getting B's were spending six hours. Now, it's also in the NESC data. And I took a look at that, at the most recent NESC data we had, and for 15 credit-- this is WSU-- for 15 credit hours, going to class and studying, it's about 25 hours a week. An average class-- so it's what, four or five classes?

I remember when I first saw this NESC data years ago. There was a meeting at the Teaching Academy. At the time, there was a corresponding student academy and student government leaders were there.

And we were going through-- the first time I ever looked at the NESC data. And at the time, it reported 11 hours outside-- for Pullman students-- 11 hours outside of class for all their classes combined, for the whole work week. And the faculty, we all kind of look at each other. And we're like, oh, that's not true. There's no way they're spending 11 hours per class.

And then the Vice Provost, of course, is no, no, no. That's total. And we're like, no, that's too low. And all the students nodded their heads. Yeah, that sounds right to us.

AUDIENCE: So what is it now, Tom?

DR. TOM TRIPP: It's actually about the same. So if you figured that 15 hours, assuming that they're going to class, 12 to 15 hours, and then you add 11 hours on top of that, you get to about 25 hours per week. And remember, the average WSU GPA is 3.2. So they are spending an average of 25 hours a week, if they're taking a full load, and they're getting B pluses. So that's the standard.

Now, hopefully we can demand more than that of our students. But the trick is, if we're going to demand more of that, particularly if we end up being above average for the workload compared to our peers here, then it's natural to say, yeah, but then they're going to hate that, and I'm going to get rated down on my evaluations. So let's deal with that a little bit. Let me make sure there's nothing else I forgot.

So up there-- can I have that clicker?

AUDIENCE: Stretch.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So up there you'll see a title of something called the Fair Process Effect-- and I'm going to fill out this 2x2 table in a minute-- but let me tell you about this concept and where it comes from. So Rebecca and I are professors of management, so I do research in the management area, and perhaps one of the most robust effects in all of management research-- that includes research on leadership-- is this thing called the Fair Process Effect. It's been found in dozens of studies, so this is not something that's going to suffer the replication crisis, and it's really kind of interesting. Well, let me lay out the pattern here, sort of get you guys-- think first in terms of the workplace and then we can talk about the classroom context.

So what we want to predict here and what we're going to fill out in these four cells is, when are people at work most likely to complain about a decision or even protest a decision, not commit to the decision, refuse to cooperate, in worst case scenario, as a function of whether they think the outcome and/or process is fair? So outcome fairness means, did I get the outcome I deserved? Did I get the pay raise I deserve? Did the right person get the promotion, et cetera?

Process fairness refers to the quality of the decision-making procedures that led to that decision. So how was the promotion decided? Who decided it? What information did they look at? How did they keep their biases out of it--these kinds of things.

And to simplify, to kind of lay out this pattern, we'll look at the extremes, that things are either fair or unfair, but of course there are shades of gray in between. So let's start with the easiest

options here. When is there most likely to be no complaints, which of those four combinations up there?

AUDIENCE: Fair and fair.

AUDIENCE: Fair.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Fair and fair.

AUDIENCE: Net not working?

DR. TOM TRIPP: Net not working. I don't know if it's the distance. Could you advance one? Thank you.

That is correct-- no complaining behavior. And probably almost as easy to guess, when is there most likely to be complaining behavior?

AUDIENCE: Unfair and unfair.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Let's advance one, and sure enough, there it is. Now, the other two off-diagonal cells are a little bit harder to predict. So let's take the one on the top right first. So this means you think the outcome is fair. You thought you got what you deserve and probably also got what you wanted, but you understand a few things about the way the decisions were made we're kind of weird and kind of suspect.

Do you, in this instance, complain about it?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

DR. TOM TRIPP: You would? Yes, no, not so sure? What do you think most people would do?

AUDIENCE: Complain.

AUDIENCE: Not complain. If you get what you want, you probably won't complain.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Why not?

AUDIENCE: Because you have what you wanted. The outcome is achieved.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So that the outcome is achieved, and why risk it by having them go through the process again?

AUDIENCE: Potentially.

DR. TOM TRIPP: That's apparently how most people think. One more? There's almost no complaining behavior. Not no complaints-- there's always somebody. You, apparently.

[LAUGHS]

AUDIENCE: No, I said I wouldn't.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Oh, I'm sorry, I got that wrong.

AUDIENCE: It was me.

[LAUGHS]

DR. TOM TRIPP: But pretty much close to zero complaining behavior. We got one more cell to go here and now we have the opposite. So here, you think the outcome is unfair. You did not get what you deserve, you probably didn't get what you want, but you're pretty sure that the decision-making procedures that led to that decision were fair, and right, and you can't find anything wrong with them. Do you complain?

AUDIENCE: It depends.

DR. TOM TRIPP: What's that?

AUDIENCE: It depends.

DR. TOM TRIPP: It depends?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: I don't think I would.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

DR. TOM TRIPP: Say again.

AUDIENCE: There is this why. If it's a process worth [INAUDIBLE].

DR. TOM TRIPP: So what's your case? Now, think of one. You agree the process was fair? Yeah, the process was fair. Then what's your problem? You didn't get what you want?

Thank you. And so you get almost no complaining behavior.

AUDIENCE: What is it that creates all the complaints, just the two unfair? There's a lot of complaining.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Correct. It's just the two unfair. So that's interesting.

So where does the name come from, fair process effect? As long as the process is fair, so that left column, you get no complaining behavior. Outcomes are irrelevant.

AUDIENCE: So the fair would be dependent on the individual then and not on what's actually fair then? Because if the process were completely unfair throughout, but the product or the result was good, that doesn't necessarily mean that the process was fair.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Correct. So it doesn't necessarily mean that you love the decision.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

DR. TOM TRIPP: But this is just you tolerate it, and this, in fact, I think is more robust in the short run. If you keep getting unfair outcomes over time but you think the process has been fair, after a while you're going to question whether the process is really fair. But in the short run, this is entirely very robust, and we keep finding it in management context after management context.

Employees may not like it, but they'll tolerate unfair outcomes as long as they believe the process is fair. As I like to say to business students, this is good news for people who have to deliver bad news, which is managers who have to say, sorry you didn't get the promotion. I'm sorry it's not the raise you want. I'm sorry it's not whatever.

Or in our case, faculty say, I'm sorry it's not the grade you were hoping for. So you can't always have everybody protesting every time you have to say no. And so this is one of my favorite things to teach.

Back to your point, what's a fair outcome? That's kind of subjective. Oh, yes it is, and there's been decades of psychology research on parsing the various ways in which people are really subjective and biased about it. Similarly, there's been decades of research on what people tend to consider as fair process.

The good news is that, while outcome fairness can be in many contexts, if not most contexts, hopelessly subjective, and you can end up in a situation, at least with employees, where not everyone is going to agree that the outcome was fair, fortunately, people generally can agree that the process was fair, that we're looking for the same things. I'll get into a little bit more in a minute of what we're looking for, but that's the notion behind the fair process effect.

So as a management professor, I was very curious, does this only work in the workplace or might this also work in the classroom? Which is what led to that study. Now, just to give you a little idea about what people can agree upon when we're looking for fair process, just some generic principles, and then we'll get more specific in terms of classes and syllabi. I want to skip over that, thanks. Would you like to maybe switch places?

AUDIENCE: Sure, if that's easier.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So this is a researcher by the name of Gerald Leventhal, and he figured out there are these five, six, or seven-- I'm going to list five of these-- features that people look for in fair decision processes. And the interesting thing about it is that this research started in legal settings in terms of people's reaction to legal authorities-- judges, juries, cops, and so forth-- whether they believe they had a fair trial or been dealt with fairly by the legal system. And then a bunch of people said, I wonder if the same principles when people are dealing with organization authorities-- like bosses and CEOs? And it turns out, yeah, it's the same five.

And they are-- consistency principle. That fair decisions should have a sense of consistency. The rules should be consistent, both across people-- that nobody is above the law or beyond the rules-- and also across time, in the sense that precedent matters.

You should have voice or input into decisions that affect you. If you're denied that voice, you tend to get fairly upset. Although other research on this is really interesting. It shows also the voice has to be sincere or it's worse than having no voice. If you give insincere voice, you're worse off than not asking their opinion at all.

The information that feeds the decision should be accurate. And how do you know that it's accurate? Well, documentation is really important in terms of the perception of accuracy. Also, if it's more subjective information, then the opinions should be coming from experts. So in the legal system, we call them expert witnesses. In organizations, we call them consultants.

Bias suppression. The authorities making a decision should have no conflicts of interest. And in an organizational setting, that standard is probably a little too high to attain. It's not quite the same purity that you get in the legal setting, but if you're a supervisor, you're expected to put aside any personal biases you might have to the best of your ability. You might not get rid of it completely, but you're expected to make an attempt to suppress them.

And then finally, can a bad decision be corrected? So in the legal system, we have appeals. And in large organizations, we also have appeal procedures. Small organizations, it might just be a manager who's got a reputation for having an open mind and willing to admit when he or she is wrong. So these are kind of the five features that we look for, and we also look for these features in terms of how classes are designed, and I'll get to in a minute. We see some of these same features being really important, and some of these you can put in your syllabus.

Now, so as I mentioned, I wanted to go ahead and study whether this actually applies to the classroom. So basically, what we did is we tested the following model, if you will, that the grades that students are getting or expect to receive leads to some sense of outcome fairness. And sure enough, and this is kind of obvious and other research has shown this too, is that students do think of grades in terms of fairness.

Did they get the grade they deserve? It's not just getting the grade that they want, that they need for whatever reason. There is a sense of deserving this.

And then does that lead to student evaluations of teaching? It's abbreviated SET in the literature. And then, is that then somehow qualified or moderated by whether the process is fair or not? And the punchline is, yeah, this model was supported.

So what we did is we asked students. We did a retrospective study where we asked students to pick a course from the previous semester, and we had them pick either the one with the highest grade or the lowest grade, and we flipped a coin for that. It was randomly determined.

And then we asked them a set of common student evaluation of teaching questions, and some of these are actually taken from the business school one, and then we also asked them some questions about whether they thought the outcome was fair. And there's already a published established scale for this, so we used that and asked questions like this. My grade I received in the course compared to the grades other students got, grade I feel I deserved, et cetera, and that scale had good reliability.

We also, from the same authors, pulled out their measures of process fairness. So missed work makeup policies students tend to think of in terms of fair process-- course attendance policies. Again, these are kinds of things we can talk about in the syllabi-- instructor's expectations. And then the Leventhal's five factors, which I just described to you.

Then we added to their scale some of these things we thought were similar to those five factors, and then it all held together and was reliable. So did the instructor follow his or her own syllabus? That would be an application of the consistency rule, for example. The way we could or could not appeal grades, that would be the correctability rule.

And this is what we found. So on the y-axis, it's student evaluations of teaching, and we took a look both in terms of outcome fairness and also in terms of grades. It's the same pattern. And basically what you find is that when fair process is high, you've got a flat line, meaning that their sense of outcome fairness-- and what I don't have it here-- and their sense of grades doesn't matter. It has absolutely no effect on student evaluations of teaching as long as they perceive the process to be fair.

By the way, let me back up for a second to something that's implied in what I've said so far. Is that this fair process effect only works if the processes are transparent. I've met managers and some faculty say, well, I know how I grade and I don't have to tell students. I know it's fair.

It's not enough to be fair. You got to look fair if you want to benefit from this, because students want fair process too. It's not just about keeping your evaluations down for your own needs.

This matches the pattern that was found in the management literature-- same pattern. So we replicated the effect that's very robust in the management literature in the classroom context. So a fair process matters.

Now, one of the things we asked, before we sort of gave them all these scales I just showed you and some others, is we just had them answer-- the first thing we asked them after we had them pick and think about a certain class that they had the previous semester-- is just right in your own words what do you think made the class fair or unfair. We didn't define fairness or anything. We just wanted their own words and see what kind of things they would come up with. And here are the top 10 things they came up with.

Well, sure enough, it's about grading fairly. That's what they tend to care about the most. Whether instructors treated everybody equally or were biased towards some students. So this is the consistency rule across people, so it fits with Leventhal.

I don't think this is an issue of fairness, but obviously they did. The instructor was helpful with learning. The rigor level was appropriate. The instructor provided study guides.

Here's another consistency item. Exam items did not match the material covered. The instructor used rubrics that matched the criteria and expectations laid out in the syllabus, and the instructor followed a syllabus that was clear. And anything else in there-- and took feedback from students. So this incorporates the voice principle as well.

Let's see how we're doing on time. I'm almost done here. There's one more, make up work and absences. So borrowing what we learned and also looking at some other studies in this literature, what would make for a procedurally fair course? What seemed to be the most important things that students would perceive a course is procedurally fair?

So one, it has a lot to do with things that are in the syllabus. So you've got to make clear what's graded and how in some level of detail. And a big one is, if you're going to grade participation, how exactly do you do that.

Is it contribution? Is it participation? Is it attendance? And if you're going to do it, it should be stated in the syllabus and what percentage it is. In my syllabi I also go and I say-- I actually talk about exactly how I grade it, what I'm looking for, and then I grade immediately after every class meeting.

Provide rubrics. So if you're using grading rubrics, which you should, you provide those in the syllabi. Any course policy you have should be in there. So what you can do with late submissions. They're curious about what your policy is on that.

What about appeal procedures? What if they disagree with the grade that you give them, what are they supposed to do next? How quickly do they have to do it?

Electronic devices is becoming a big one. There's a lot of variance amongst faculty about their views on electronic devices, so it's not obvious to students. Academic integrity, of course.

One of the things I'll say-- not so much I've learned from the study, but just in my role as associate dean and previously a program director at Vancouver, and I've read a lot of syllabi and I've read a lot of evaluations, more than God intended anybody to read-- is I've seen a lot of academic integrity things. I see there is a boilerplate statement, but then there's no statement that follows. "In my class, I consider an academic integrity violation to be." One of the things in discussions I've noticed with faculty when we talk about academic integrity, there's a lot of faculty think most faculty have the same views as they did. And one in which faculty don't have very similar views is on collaboration among students, so particularly, if you have group projects.

So what are they supposed to collaborate on and what's supposed to be individual work? Most faculty could probably agree on an articulation of the spirit of the policy behind that, but the manifestation of that, it's all over the board. And so I've seen a lot of cases of professors, that student committed an academic integrity violation. Then I read the syllabus, it's like, that's not obvious to me. And part of the reason it's not obvious is because they didn't just read your syllabus, they read a bunch of other people's syllabi and saw other policies and other courses, and they're kind of anchoring it off of that.

So I strongly encourage you to not just include, because you have to, the university boilerplate statement, but then add on right after that. And in my class, here are-- in my class I say, here are four behaviors that may not seem like integrity violations, but they are-- bam, bam, bam, bam.

AUDIENCE: Intentional versus unintentional, plagiarism, for example. We have it, because we work with international students. So we have a consistent plagiarism or academic integrity policy, and we teach students how to paraphrase and how to cite, and they're not familiar with those practices. And they come from countries where they have to copy, verbatim, whatever is said in the textbook, and here it's different. So we have a very, very clear academic integrity policy, differentiating between the first incident, and the second incident, and what happens.

DR. TOM TRIPP: I think that's a really great point. Because you try and think of, well, who's actually reading your syllabus and going to use it? And it's not just students coming from other courses at WSU, but from other courses from other institutions and other nations and have very different notions of that. I think I see a couple more items here.

Just a couple things to keep in mind, stick to your syllabus policies, whatever they are. It's a consistency principle. And one other thing that came up I think is really helpful is grading blindly by student ID number and let them know that you're grading blindly, particularly in small classes.

Because students might get it-- after a while, well, there's the teacher's pet or this teacher just didn't like this student for whatever reason, and they might worry about it. But if they know that you're grading blindly, then they know that that can't enter into it, and that fits with the general principle of bias suppression. I think that's all I've got. And then, of course, be transparent, because that's what counts. So you don't need to see those. So do you want to just take questions at the end and just turn it over to you, because I think you'll probably be able to answer some of these questions?

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Yeah. Do you guys want to keep rolling and then we'll leave time to workshop? That's great. I guess I'll switch you spots.

I'm just kind of curious for all three sites, would folks mind going around saying what department or unit that they're from just to get a sense of who's here? Do you mind? Start here, and go around, and we'll hit the other campuses. Please.

AUDIENCE: So I'm Rasheeda from international programs here.

AUDIENCE: [? Emat, ?] international programs.

AUDIENCE: I'm Samuel [? Lionel, ?] educational psychology programs.

AUDIENCE: Natalia, college of education, teaching, and learning.

AUDIENCE: Raven Weaver, human development.

AUDIENCE: Samantha [? Gazerion, ?] neuroscience.

AUDIENCE: Mary Packer, AOI.

AUDIENCE: I'm Amy May, AOI, that's Academic Outreach and Integrity. Integrity-- no, no, no. Innovation.

[LAUGHS]

AUDIENCE: Now my values are [LAUGHS].

AUDIENCE: Lindsay Barkley, AOI.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: So I'm Anna, and I hail from the English department. How about Vancouver? Oh, I'm sorry.

AUDIENCE: Aminah, AOI.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Oh, sorry, Aminah. Aminah, AOI, very good.

AUDIENCE: I'm Kimberly Seville from the psych department here in Vancouver.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Great, thank you, and Tri-Cities?

AUDIENCE: I'm Ellis Matthews in the psychology department.

AUDIENCE: Matt [INAUDIBLE], anthropology.

AUDIENCE: Kevin from mathematics.

AUDIENCE: I'm Rochelle from department of education, teaching, and learning.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Great, thanks. And then also I was curious, by a show of hands, who works with students who are either first or second year students or pre-WSU? Who's working with first or second years?

AUDIENCE: [? First year ?]

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Thank you. I was just curious for some context. Let's see what happens here-- keep going.

So I think this is a really interesting and really helpful conversation. And so the angle that I wanted to add to that or my inroads for this conversation is thinking about students' perceptions of faculty. And so as the director of class, there's really three things we're always trying to do.

We're trying to help students feel more invited into the interior life of the university, so helping students understand their place here, working with faculty to help them really think critically about the relationship between retention and pedagogy, like do they have a role in those matters, and then really including folks on the student affairs side of the house. Because there's a lot of great folks doing a lot of great work, but they often complain, rightly, that they don't have any access to faculty or any way to collaborate. So that's the kind of three things that we're always up to.

And so I just want to say I think there's always two dangers in talking about students who are underrepresented. And so we either sometimes will stereotype or hyperdefine students, and that's not necessarily productive, but then I think sometimes there's really good intentions that err in the other direction. So we end up having not any conversation at all, because we're not quite sure how to talk about things, and we end up really sanitizing difference. And so I just kind of acknowledge that. So hopefully, as we move forward in conversation, we can know that those are kind of the two banks of the river, but find our way.

So here, this slide does not look terribly exciting, but this is really what I'm hoping folks can take away from this aspect of the workshop. So I think there's three things that we're always

working on when we're working with faculty, and the first one really ties in quite closely. This idea of making the rules explicit whenever possible for students, absolutely that's a matter of equity. These things don't cost us really anything, and so at some point, it's a matter of just training our brains to figure out what that looks like.

Because I trust that the intention of most faculty is good, but we know what we know, we're so familiar with what we know, that it's oftentimes hard for us to sort out what explicit equity would look like. And so the second thing we're always talking to faculty about is this idea of how to diffuse the effects of stereotype threat with environmental cues. And so what can faculty do to reduce stereotype threat? And we'll unpack that term in a minute.

And then also, just again, encouraging a malleable view of intelligence. And so to what extent can we constantly be helping students understand that we don't see them as fixed in any way and that they should likewise not see themselves in those terms? By show of hands, who's familiar with stereotype threat already? I know we have psych folks.

So just really quickly, I really enjoy this book, *Whistling Vivaldi*, if this is of interest to you, because how we define it here in the next 20 seconds will be insufficient. But stereotype threat theory is this idea that oftentimes we're in situations where there's a threat of being viewed in a stereotypical way and a fear that we'll do something that will confirm a stereotype about a group that were associated with, and then that actually is linked with lots of good data to diminish performance. And I can't stop talking about this, because I think it's so incredibly important, and particularly because the students who are most affected by stereotype are the students who care the most and who are working the hardest. That's terrifying to me as a faculty member, that I'm going to have students in my class, that absolutely are prepared to be there, are motivated to be there, but that there might be things happening in that classroom environment that put them in a situation where they perform below the level that they are prepared and motivated to perform at.

So if you're not familiar, Dr. Claude Steele, in the early tests, they gave black and white students from Stanford-- all really smart students-- a challenging portion of the GRE, and there was this huge discrepancy with how white and black students performed. And you can see the second set of bars-- and this, again, it's kind of a gross generalization, so go back and read the research for yourself. But the only thing that they changed is they let the students know that there wasn't anything in the task that-- no way to identify them in the task. And you can see that those are really different--

AUDIENCE: Wow.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Wow. That's how I feel. I can't stop talking about this.

Because I just think, oh my gosh, what if that's my classroom? And that the only difference is some students were feeling this pressure, either by things that I've said, or just things that happened to them earlier in the day, or just things that have happened to them earlier in the

week, or things that happened to them before they got to WSU. And so for me, this is something we can always be paying attention to.

And just in summary, so a reduction in stereotype threat, what we're always working towards when we're working against stereotype threat-- I think this is really helpful language from Steele-- "an open relaxed posture for learning." And I that's interesting, because at least in an English land, from where I hail, there was a lot of publication, there's a good 5, 10 years where everything was talk about the contact zone of the classroom, and having classrooms where we're debating ideas, and that is good and right, but that I think can be teased apart from this idea that a student is psychologically distressed by wondering what's happening in the environment. And so this isn't to say that we can't facilitate challenging conversations in class, but to the extent that we can figure out ways to help students stay in an open relaxed posture for learning, they will then perform according to their ability and their level of preparation, which to me, is an issue of equity.

So I'm going to show you in a second-- so class had done some work with the folks who teach Psych 105 here on the Pullman campus, and one of the Psych 105 instructors decided to retool her syllabus in light of those conversations, and I thought it was interesting. So when we said, hey, we want you to think about being more explicit, we want you to think about reducing stereotype threat, and we want you to think about how you can encourage a malleable view of intelligence just in your syllabus, and these are the things that she decided to do. And so I don't find this list prescriptive by any means, but I think it's interesting.

So when we proposed those three tasks, this is what you came up with. She decided that she wanted a syllabus that had better visual appeal and that was learner-centered in these following ways. That the grading criteria was clear, which goes back again to the research we looked at earlier.

That there was an easy-to-read schedule, again, an issue of being explicit. She decided to host virtual office hours before exams. And so instead of requires to just come back to campus-- perhaps they're parents or they're working and had other things going on-- that you could do that with the digital tools that are available to us.

She ended up with a section that showed expectations for students and what they could expect of her, and so she made those things clear as well or changed how that was organized. She also was a first generation student, and she was remembering back-- as we're going through this workshop, she's like, oh, that's right. When I was a first year student, I honestly didn't know.

When it said, "office hours," I thought that meant, I'm going to be in my office doing my important work. Don't come by. And so she's like, oh, I'm going to add language that explains what office hours are there for, to put out a better invitation. And then she decided also to include information about community resources.

Again, I don't think these things are prescriptive, but that's how she interpreted the task. So you can see-- not very closely, I apologize. I was going to bring them to you so you could look at them, but I forgot. But so on the left, you see the old syllabi, which is pretty much boilerplate coming from the department, and on the right, you can see the beginning of the one that she revised.

And again, I love looking at the things that she did, but I don't think I would build a syllabus that looks like that. And so I don't want you to get excited and think, OK, I have to build mine that way. I think the point is that you now have an instructor who's critically engaged with her own practice.

And so it was interesting enough that we said, let's go show these two syllabi to 300 students who have been coded by WSU as underrepresented in one way or another. And they they're not in her class. We're just going to go give 300 students, who don't know her, these two syllabi and ask them some questions about it. So really, they're questions about faculty perception, because they haven't been to this class, they don't know this particular instructor.

And so I pulled a couple, because I thought they were interesting. So the 300 students who we asked to look at these documents thought-- and so on the left, you're going to have the old, and then on the right, you're going to have the revised. They said that this document helps me understand expectations, and there was quite a jump between the old and the new. And so they said this document clearly describes what students can expect.

There was a huge jump. And really, I don't know that she added that much more language, but she actually built it as kind of a T Bar. Like these are my expectations of you, this is what you can expect from me, and so that information was easy to find. And you can see there's a pretty significant change in perception there.

This document guides me too the information I would need to be successful. The information was findable. There was a a table of contents in the new design, if you go back and see. You can't totally tell, but she actually had, you could see, on page two, you'll find this. On page three, that's where you'll find that.

And then I think this is fascinating. So remember, the students who are taking this survey have never met this person, but they overwhelmingly found her much more approachable. So then the danger there is like, I don't know if I want to write a syllabus that makes me feel approachable, because I'm pretty busy already. And so I don't know that I necessarily want students liking me or coming by, but we'll get to that.

So maybe that's just me. Is that just me? Am I the only one that doesn't want every student to come by?

AUDIENCE: You're not alone.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: You're not alone. Let's be real. It's week nine, right? This is week nine.

Question eight. This document conveys the instructor's commitments to uphold principles of diversity and inclusion. I find this fascinating. What on earth? How is it that you have such a big jump, that you perceive this person to be much more aware of issues of diversity and inclusion just based on this syllabus? That's curious to me.

And it was curious enough that we actually, this semester, have an open study looking more specifically, trying to tease out more about this, and so stay tuned. But I made a slide so I wouldn't forget to say, I thought it was also really important to note, for those of us who were worried about seeming nicer or more open, that she also reported that she had a steep reduction in student email queries. So when we make these moves to appear more open and inclusive, or design documents in such a way that they are maybe more learner-centered, it's not going to actually create more work for us. In fact, it might even create less.

Students find information they need. They don't have to email you about it. And then tying that all back to stereotype threat, to the extent that a student perceives that this faculty member understands issues of diversity and inclusion, I think it's fair to say-- although I don't have the data yet to say-- there's a better chance that they will come to that class already in a more open relaxed posture for learning. That environment, hopefully, will have less initial stereotype threat, because the perception is that this is going to be a space where I'm going to be treated fairly, I'm going to be graded fairly, and so on and so forth.

So it's very hot, it's very late in the day. This is the democratic part of the show. Would you like to do large group-- do you have questions? Do you want to discuss and have a large group kind of Q&A session?

Or I would propose next, we would just take two or three minutes in smaller groups and figure out what's useful to you here. What do you prefer? What do you prefer in Tri-Cities?

AUDIENCE: Small groups probably.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: The question was, do you want to take two minutes and figure out what you know? Or do you have some questions? You want to go straight to questions and answers?

AUDIENCE: We're fine with discussion.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Good. So your homework is, take two minutes, talk to somebody next to you. What, from this kind of joint presentation, what's immediately useful to you?

What are the takeaways? And then we're going to ask you do something with it, so be warned, pick ones that you actually want to work with. Two minutes-- ready, go.

So I have found-- this is funny, right? Just because when you sit in a room with teachers, sometimes they're not awesome participates. But it's like Pavlov's dog. If you bring a pen and say, I'm going to write what you tell me on the board, all of a sudden, everybody will play. Do you know this?

It is true, right? So I have my pen, and I'm ready to hear back from folks. So what was the substance of your conversation? What are the takeaways? What are the potential usable bits and pieces that you might-- you're not committed-- that you might decide to go home and tinker with in your own syllabus?

So Tri-Cities, can we hear from you first maybe?

AUDIENCE: Sure. So we agreed upon a table of contents being useful in our really long syllabi.

AUDIENCE: Maybe defining office hours. I thought that was kind of cool. I never thought of that before.

AUDIENCE: And I'm excited to try blind grading just to see how that changes things.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Sorry, I missed that one.

AUDIENCE: Oh, blind grading.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Oh, blind grading.

AUDIENCE: I like that one too.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: I have a question. By a show of hands, who can do that? I definitely teach a course where it's not even an option. Who can blind grade if they want to?

Good. So, yes, good, it's a mixed group.

AUDIENCE: We do sometimes.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, we do.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: You can.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Any others from Tri-Cities? The Pullman?

AUDIENCE: Malleable view of intelligence and growth mindset stuff.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Growth mindset. I know this is a serious workshop, but can I just really fast tell you guys a funny growth mindset story? Or I think it's funny.

AUDIENCE: Sure.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: So the public school in Pullman was hitting it hard last fall, like it was a growth mindset all day every day. And my son was playing parks and rec football. He went for the first day. I dropped him off. I go to pick him up, and apparently some other child there, when the coach said, hey, try that again, they had said, no, F you-- which not cool.

I'm not laughing about that. But but my son, Mo, I was like, hey, Mo, how was the first day? He's like, man, there's a kid on my team and he does not have a growth mindset.

[LAUGHS]

That's awesome. I'm going to write [LAUGHS] teacher. Something after school, the kid was thinking, he doesn't have a very flexible brain. Yes, I love it.

So a growth mindset. Thanks. Pullman, do you guys want anything? Oh, did I miss one? Vancouver?

AUDIENCE: Vancouver?

AUDIENCE: I think they're gone.

AUDIENCE: I think they left.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, Vancouver's--

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: They left.

AUDIENCE: So what we have on our syllabi expectations from the students. We expect you to be on time, do this, do that, but we don't have what they expect from us. So I really like that.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: That's of faculty.

AUDIENCE: Correct.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Did I hear that right? Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Great.

AUDIENCE: I think the [INAUDIBLE] was not so assumed that's the thing to understand what do you mean by concept or by what you've put in. They come to the class with expectations they've carried from another class to yours, so you need to clarify whatever it means.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Absolutely. I thought that bit about-- I was implicated in the cut and paste on the academic integrity. So what that means in the syllabi by that we know, for good reason, the chair of your department says, this stuff better be in. And so it's like, oh. And so in my mind that means that stuff's not open for expansion.

I'm going to cut and paste what I'm supposed to cut and paste, but then I'd never even considered this idea that I could then go-- what that means on my planet, the one that looks like when you're looking for a grade in this class. That was, I thought, super helpful. Yes, anybody else? Yes.

AUDIENCE: Well, I'm not an instructor. I'm an instructional designer, but just thinking about how my instructors might be affected by the idea of getting bad student evaluations, that when I look at their syllabi and I like they're kind of avoiding making it too rigorous, I can point out to them, if we clarify certain expectations, you can make it as rigorous as it like. So I thought clarifying was good as well, which is something I got confirmed.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Because you're doing this coaching and they're pushing back sometimes on things, and no, it's going to be OK. I've seen a chart. It's going to be [LAUGHS].

AUDIENCE: It's all going to be OK.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: You'll survive this. Absolutely.

AUDIENCE: We didn't talk about this, but one of the things that sort of stands out to me is, in my mind, I assume students want the shorter syllabus, just the information. They don't want to go digging through it. It makes sense that maybe a longer syllabus, that's more visually appealing, that's got a table of contents-- I would never have thought-- take room out of my syllabus and add a table of contents, make my syllabus longer would be helpful. I'm always trying to squeeze it down into three to four pages so it's not a novel, but I feel like that's [LAUGHS].

But I think there's room for a happy medium, where it could be more visually appealing and more organized. I was telling my seniors, because we do posters in my senior capstone class, and I always tell my students that buzzing feeling in your head is your brain working too hard trying to find the information, but I never thought about applying that to a syllabus.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Yes, that it's too dense, absolutely.

AUDIENCE: Just to add to that, that's just something we do a lot in our department too, is we'll come across a lot of stuff. If we're trying to recreate a course for internal purposes, we'll say,

wow, this is really text heavy, and we'll start breaking up the information, giving it tables and bullet points so it's easier to read, less overwhelming. So I agree, that's a good idea.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: I'm glad you're feeling that permission, and it's making me think-- we always think, oh, we're going to make it shorter because the students don't want to carry it around. But also, I have definitely thought unkind thoughts about the person at the copy machine who has the really long-- right? On a department culture level, you're like, I hate that guy who prints out the really long syllabus and now I have to come back tomorrow. And so I think yeah, there are probably ways to think about publishing these things digitally so we don't necessarily have to imagine that more is more expensive, or bigger, or heavier. We can kind of mess with how to do that so that we're not that person at the copy machine. Yes.

DR. TOM TRIPP: That's the thing that really struck me the most, building off that point, is, one, college business needs a new syllabus template, as does the university. But it was so graphically well laid out. I think faculty, and just speaking for myself, are so steeped in that culture of writing papers and how you do layout based on that, and not really thinking about the new layout options that are available. Like the Psych 105 that you showed, where it's so much cleaner and so much more inviting to read. And I'm really kicking myself, because my wife is a graphic artist and I should know better. [LAUGHS]

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Oh, please.

AUDIENCE: Well, somewhat related to that, I brought up the issue that I use rubrics, but sometimes I want-- I'm teaching a 400-level, and instead of a traditional research paper, I wanted them to do a resource, a community resource. And I recently was asked, during office hours, are you trying to trick us? Are you going to do this creative assignment where we're allowed to have some flexibility?

So that tension between how to make a rubric, so that they can use and be flexible and have creativity in their assignments, but not getting so prescribed. And I think that we are kind of trained that way too. We need to have this information, but how to encourage thinking outside the box or still being able to have a rubric for that type of information. So I don't know if that's more of a conversation, but we were talking about that issue.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: We'll put that on the list for AOI, because I totally resonate. I more and more teach classes where my implicit goal is that students-- which actually may be explicit-- that students just take big risks. I want them to take big risks and do interesting stuff, but I don't really want to show them examples, because then they're going to do--

AUDIENCE: Exactly.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: So I completely resonate with that tension, and so I've been trying to get better at creating rubrics that show you where the points are coming from but not telling you

what to do. What's a rubric look like that says, take a giant risk. You won't be punished as long as you fulfill these pieces.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, exactly.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Well, I would come to that.

AUDIENCE: So we work with the international students, and they come and they do not really understand what the syllabus is. So we do spend time on teaching the syllabus. So we have activities, syllabus analysis.

But still, I didn't know that I was allowed to have my own design. And she's the assistant director of in our program. So I asked her, and she said yes. So I'm also thinking about teaching the syllabus to the student-- not only teaching it, spending more time.

AUDIENCE: That's a great idea.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: That's a great point.

AUDIENCE: Tying it down to a theme.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: I've definitely heard of faculty-- so particularly if you create something like the second revision or the Psych 105. And you expect that it's used as a reference tool if you design it as a reference tool for students, and you expect them to use it so that they don't email you and ask you super stupid stuff, then it would make sense to have an open book quiz. And it would take five minutes in class, but you're like, hey, here's your open book quiz. Use your book.

I've created this document for you. I expect you to reference it, become familiar.

AUDIENCE: I actually love this idea of the syllabus analysis for the 100- and 200-level courses. Because I am a former faculty who's teaching right now from my old department while I'm doing my other job, but I make my 101 class like a college success slash whenever I'm teaching. So I teach them how to analyze their situation. We really go through the syllabus and look at what's there, but I never thought of it in the way that you're talking about it.

But we do tons of analysis to teach them success tips-- how to write an email to a professor and get a response, things like that. One other thing I thought of is tone. I think the color of that second one, just adding some color to it. Because if we think about who a lot of our students are, they're bombarded with color. And we give them these black and white big blocks of text to read in a syllabus, and I think that colored just warmed it up, and I was thinking about that even with our tone.

I have like a little motto that I use, and I put it in my syllabus, usually by the office hours, and I also send it out often on emails or email responses. It's just simply, "Your success is my goal." So I came up with something like, why do I want my students-- and I feel like we can start with a motto or something that tells students.

Like I'm not trying to trick you. I don't want to see you not do well. I want to see you get all the way through successful. When we make our syllabus layout effective and we make it warm, that invites them to feel like maybe we're approachable and we actually care about their success.

AUDIENCE: I think it's a recurring theme. I've heard it. Many people say it here.

It's the fact that there is a need to maybe take their research hope and find out what are the specific research principles that revised syllabus followed, because it's not just about color. There are some principles that-- is it a table of contents? I was trying to explain that, for me, in my multimedia learning design-- and that's the unit I have in my educational psychology program. We talk about principles of design in multimedia.

We talk about Q, using Q as a principle. Q helps people with little prior knowledge, so we know that Q is a principle for design learning. So irrespective of the color you choose, there is something called Q as a principle. There's something called "verbal redundancy" as a principle.

When you are designing a PowerPoint, what you are saying should not be on the screen. What you're saying should be different from what is on the screen. That is a principle.

So can we come up with principles to guide design of syllabi so that people can have that in the back of their mind when they are designing that kind of stuff.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Yeah, we're working on it. You want in? We're working on it, but you're more than welcome.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Because I think the more the merrier, and that is the next kind of phase of research. And it's funny. So Amy was so excited. That's who did the-- not this Amy-- who did the revision. She was so excited about it that she really wants templates.

And my bias, I really just want critically engaged faculty. So there's this tricky thing where it's like, well, do we just say, here's a template? Which I think you're right. If we do research and say, this template works really well. These things make it easy to find. Plug in your information and go.

And based on the fact that this study was blinded, it seems like there's probably something there. People will perceive you this way if you use this template. So there's something important there.

But for me, there's also this issue of, that's part of it, but what I really want to know is, are you someone who's constantly thinking of ways to be more explicit, to think about how you-- like this group over here is talking about. When I bold things my intention is, hey, I'm going to make sure you don't miss this information, but it reads like yelling. So then where are we at?

AUDIENCE: Well, it's definitely something that we implement over at global campus is consistency across the board. And then we actually have templates that we implement on the online space so there's a consistency between the class schedule and what not. So everything looks similar.

So students can easily find it, and it's expected that this is the way it's going to look. If you need this information, it's going to be located here, and it's not as bombarded I guess. So I think having some sort of template or design principle for syllabus is a great idea.

AUDIENCE: Although, this analysis would take care of that, because they learn how to analyze it and find--

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Tri-Cities, you haven't had turn in a while. You guys want to jump back in? Anything you want to riff off of? No, you're good? I'm feeling pretty good about this list. Anything else we want to add to the list?

While you're thinking, Amy, I do think that this is something that we can get better at that won't necessarily cost us money or time. The students won't necessarily be coming and crying and telling us all their troubles. But if any of us, who do teach first year courses or core courses, can think about the fact that college success can be our business and what small ways we can tinker to do that, I think that is really interesting. And again, this isn't empirical, but I started to notice-- as I have tried to get better at being explicit because I think it's an equity issue-- as I've tried to get better at this, I've noticed that I have, quite often in the comments part of evaluations, students will say something about kindness. They'll say, she's really kind, which to me is different than nice.

So when I say, hey, here's what's on the secret menu, here's what you didn't learn about it live, here's how you get around here, I'm just going to be really clear with you about how you can take big risks and do OK in this class, the way that that perception, what's being translated to the student is like, man, this person is kind. I don't know. It's not an empirical thing, but I've started to notice that.

I was like, that's weird. That wasn't there a couple years ago. Why kindness? I don't know.

And then also, when we worked directly with students-- we went to I think like-- I think I saw 130 students on Pullman campus in the first week of class who were all first generation students or like low-income. They were somehow coded as underrepresented. And we asked them, we're like, hey, what still matters in college is getting to office hours. You need to meet your faculty. They need to know who you are.

And so then when we would ask them, what are your reasons for not going? Why are you not going to go see faculty? And I was like, let's get it out. Tell me your real answers.

And every single class, no matter who we were talking to, students will always say, I wouldn't go see them if I was embarrassed, because I should be doing-- it's the exact opposite of the thing that you're thinking. You're like, well, if you're not doing well you would come see me. And the students are like hard no.

No chance I'm coming to see you, because I'm the first person in my family to go to college. This is a big deal. I came here with a good attitude. I came to work hard. I'm the smartest kid from my school, and I'm here, and I can't figure this thing out.

And that means that I have disappointed my parents. I've disappointed you, and there's no chance I'm coming by because I don't deserve to come to your office. And faculty, you're like, no way. Yes, way. Yes way every time-- well, not every time.

And so trying to tell students, no, that's not true. We do want to see you if you're struggling. But I think it's helpful for us, at this side of the table, to figure out ways, in something like our syllabus, that we can mediate that or make better invitations. And like I said, I don't think you'll actually-- it won't hurt us. We won't get more emails and won't actually cost more time. But helping students understand that we do want to invite them into the interior life of the university.

So we like 10 minutes left. I just would open it up. We've made a pretty good list. Any last minute adds, something to add?

What about questions? Anything that you want to explore more deeply? You want to go back to a slide and expand the conversation? You want to make requests from the AOI staff of what you want to talk about next time?

[LAUGHS]

DR. TOM TRIPP: Well, while you're thinking about it, I have a question that I hope is quick and isn't derailing. But coming from the Vancouver campus, I keep hearing about this thing that students call "syllabus week."

AUDIENCE: It's a lie.

DR. TOM TRIPP: What exactly does that mean in your opinion?

AUDIENCE: I think it means they don't think you're going to teach them anything that first week, so they don't come prepared, which is not how I do things.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Yeah, me either.

AUDIENCE: And one of my colleagues actually waits to go over the syllabus until the second week, because she figures there's add/ drops. She might talk about it informally, say these are the expectations, and still have it available, but not go over it in the syllabus week.

AUDIENCE: Does she cover any required concepts in the first week?

AUDIENCE: No, I don't think so.

AUDIENCE: The other impression is that there's nothing that's important in the first week. So students can add and drop during that first week and they won't miss anything.

DR. TOM TRIPP: So it's a label that doesn't have to do with too much time is spent going over the syllabus. It's just a shorthand term that students are using here for nothing happens the first week. Don't go to class.

DR. ANNA PLEMONS: Like you're saying, shopping week.

AUDIENCE: Shopping week, yeah. That's a really good way to put it, shopping week.

DR. TOM TRIPP: I know we don't have that at Vancouver. What about at Tri-Cities?

AUDIENCE: No.

AUDIENCE: The students might think it, but it's no.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Thanks.

AUDIENCE: So I have a question about fairness, because it's very important. So how can we ask the students about-- sometimes we do midterm evaluations and we ask them to give their feedback about the course. So can we insert whether they think their teacher is fair or no? Can I ask my students this question?

DR. TOM TRIPP: You could. I don't-- and I think--

AUDIENCE: It's an important point.

DR. TOM TRIPP: It is an important point, and I'm hesitating because I'm just wondering-- I don't know the answer-- if you might prime them in ways that you don't want to prime them by asking the question.

AUDIENCE: Because I want an honest answer, [LAUGHS] yeah.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Another way to get it, when I've done midterm evaluations-- and we've all done variations on this. Whatever version you may use, some sort of open-ended prompt, like the one I use is, name two things that are going well and two things that are going poorly you'd like to see changed. And they write their open-ended responses. And I expect with some sort of open-ended prompt like that, that if they really think the class is unfair, they'll say so.

Another thing that can be kind of helpful, though this is a lot more work, but it's really useful, is setting up peer review systems where faculty go watch other faculty teach and then you interview their students for 20 minutes. So we have a system like that in business in Vancouver. We're all required to go through it. And I learned more from that about somebody's class than I do from reading their evals. And when students think something's unfair, it comes right up.

AUDIENCE: But this could cause tension among faculty.

DR. TOM TRIPP: It could, depending how it's handled. It doesn't cause tension among us, and in part, because we're not competitive about it, and it's more sort of really sort of a formative information than evaluative information. So faculty can put it in the promotion packets or not. We're more just trying to help each other teach better.

AUDIENCE: I wanted to add a comment on the midterm evaluation piece. I mentioned when we were talking in the groups that I do a reflection activity around this time, where I actually get the students to go back to hear the course expectations, and how well do you think you're meeting those, and here are the learning goals for the class. Where do you think you are?

And I give them that transparency of linking these activities are related to what these outcomes that we're looking for and then some of that growth mindset stuff. What's going well, and what do you want to work on, and what are some strategies to work on that? But that's a thought of-- the fairness piece could be built into that as well, a little bit about talking about the process a little bit more I think.

DR. TOM TRIPP: What you're doing sounds great to me. And I think if you're asking that many questions and you throw in a fairness question, my guess is you're not overly priming them. But if it were like one or two or three questions you ask that, I'd be worried, the priming. I'd be worried.

What is it? A little Shakespeare line, "I've doth protest too much." Well, why are you asking?

AUDIENCE: Anyway, we develop that when we were doing I guess the lift training as an option of sneaking in some of those things and reflections, which is a nice thing for students to be doing. So I just thought I'd share that.

DR. TOM TRIPP: Thanks.

AMINAH: Well, thank you, Tom and Anna, from Rebecca, and the AOI team for joining us and presenting. I thought it was great. And thank you, everyone, for attending. Tri-Cities, it's good to see you. Thanks for hanging out, and until next time.