

CTL's Monthly Newsletter keeps you updated on research-informed teaching strategies, events, and support available to everyone in the UMSL teaching community.



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Role Student Feedback

Article written by learning analytics coordinator Amber Burgett.

In collaboration with faculty and students and informed by research, the Teaching Effectiveness Taskforce has crafted a new common question set currently piloted in some academic units. We've included information about the pilot below. In addition to the updated question set, UMSL's Teaching Effectiveness Taskforce recommends shifting the language on campus to characterize end-of-semester evaluations from "Course Evaluations" to "Student Feedback Surveys." We feel it is not the role of students to evaluate an instructor's teaching but instead to provide valuable feedback about how each student experienced the course. Students can experience the same course content, assessment, and climate differently. Anonymous student feedback surveys can provide useful information from students to help us continuously improve our courses to reach students in transformative ways. Using student feedback, we can make informed decisions to tailor intentional and meaningful learning opportunities for all UMSL students.

See the "Teaching Intentions" section below for practical implementation ideas of how to increase your response rates on student feedback surveys, frame them in a way that provides you with constructive and actionable feedback and minimizes bias. Our website also contains helpful resources:

- [How to solicit meaningful student feedback](#)
- [How to make the most of student feedback](#)

Update: Student Feedback Survey Pilot

A new [common student feedback survey](#) was offered as an opt-in pilot in Summer 2022. The main results of the student feedback about the new instrument were:

- 84% positive response
- 5% negative response
- Requests for more opportunities to comment on instructor strengths/opportunities for growth

The opt-in pilot has been extended through Fall 2022 with the addition of one question:

- Do you have any additional comments to share about the course or the instructor?

Course Evaluation System

Course evaluations are now managed in the CTL. The Faculty Senate set dates for the opening and closing course evaluation surveys and when faculty can access their results.

Dates for CourseEval Survey Administrations

Fall 2022

8-Week 1 courses: Monday, Oct 3 - 16

16-Week and 8-Week 2 courses: Monday, Nov 28 - Dec 11

As decided by the Faculty Senate, the course evaluation schedule for the 2022-

2023 academic year follows a familiar pattern of collection dates updated on the [CoursEval Resources Guide webpage](#) and the [CoursEval for Students webpage](#). On these web pages, faculty and students can find information on when surveys will be open, report release dates, and information on the CoursEval system.

Three Teaching Intentions - Student Feedback Edition

This section will highlight technology, activities, practices, or elements of course design for the online or on-ground classroom to be implemented intentionally. Every suggestion will not be appropriate for every context. Please see our contact information at the bottom of the newsletter to set up an individual consultation if you are interested in discussing these ideas in more detail.



Increase your Response Rate

Practice: For those teaching for a while, we remember when students completed written student feedback in class meetings. Now that we have moved to complete student feedback surveys online, we generally don't set class time aside for this practice, but this is something that can be done to increase participation. Other strategies include:

- Incentives for the whole class to take the evaluation (e.g., if 80% of the class completes the survey, everyone gets x# extra credit points).
- Tell the students that the information is more reliable when more students complete student feedback surveys.
- Send emails, and Canvas announcements that include messages about why completing student feedback surveys are helpful and meaningful to future course iterations.

DO NOT require students to submit evidence of completing student feedback surveys through Canvas. This practice erodes confidence in student feedback surveys as being anonymous forms of feedback.



What does Constructive Feedback Look Like?

Practice: Use student feedback surveys as a learning moment to talk about constructive feedback. A great opening conversation discusses the advantages and disadvantages of anonymous feedback. Most students have experienced anonymous commenting online - ask them what they notice through a poll or open discussion. Many might say - biased or rude comments and comments from the extremes. Students will need to give and receive feedback throughout their careers. This is an opportunity to connect student feedback surveys to an opportunity to put these skills into practice and have their voices heard to create more inclusive and robust learning environments for others. Topics for discussions include:

- Noticing biased language when providing feedback

- Examples of helpful vs. unhelpful feedback

The Teaching Effectiveness Taskforce is working on new resources tailored to UMSL.

[Click here for examples of helpful and unhelpful language examples in student feedback surveys.](#)

[Click here for an example of a prompt that can be used to call attention to gender bias in student feedback surveys.](#)

3 Make it Meaningful

Practices: None of us want to complete surveys if we feel the feedback we provide isn't meaningful. Talk to students throughout the semester about how you have improved aspects of the course through student feedback. Indicate to students that they play an important role in helping to improve the learning environment for other students at UMSL.

Meet your New Colleagues

Each month we will feature faculty who are new to UMSL. Please reach out and welcome them to campus.

Paulo Tan

Assistant Professor

Department of Educator Preparation and Leadership
College of Education



Paulo Tan, PhD. identifies as Asian-American, cisgender male, whose research focuses on advancing intersectional justice in and through mathematics education centering disabilities. His career in higher education includes faculty appointments at Johns Hopkins University, University of Hawaii, and University of Tulsa. Prior to this, he served as a public-school middle-secondary mathematics teacher for ten years in culturally and linguistically diverse settings in Kansas City and Indianapolis. Inspired by his son,

Dr. Tan pursued a doctorate in special education with an emphasis in mathematics education and has been reckoning and challenging educational inequities ever since. Dr. Tan's works have been published in journals such as *Review of Educational Research*, *American Educational Research Journal*, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, and *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*. He is the lead author of the book *Humanizing Disability in Mathematics Education: Forging New Paths* published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. He is regularly invited to give presentations to national STEM organizations.

Dr. Tan has three children ages 18, 11, and 9 who he loves spending time and learning with. He also enjoys traveling, listening to podcasts, reading, connecting with nature, and being with friends and family.

Student Voice

Written by Christina Karam

Throughout the year, we will be incorporating student voices into the newsletter. The Center for Teaching and Learning greatly values student voices in all aspects of teaching, from design to delivery. Students chosen are current [Active Learning Assistants or Supplemental Instructors](#). Christina Karam is a Biology major, pre-med student, and an Active Learning Assistant for Anthropology 1041 with Jennifer Nolan.

My educational career has not been the most “typical.” I began higher education in Beirut, Lebanon, where I had been living for eight years. Like many students fresh out of high school, I felt the pressure of finding new friends and keeping up with my classes. Little did I know, that would be the easiest part of my educational career.

When inflation in Lebanon began to rise, so did the violent anti-government riots. Demonstrators took to the streets, blocking roads with burning tires. On top of that, there was (and still is) a gas shortage. My biggest challenge no longer had anything to do with my university – but how to get to campus. Classes would be suspended for weeks at a time, which began to negatively affect my education. Transportation to campus was no longer feasible, and Lebanon was not a safe environment.

Out of concern for my safety and education, I decided to leave Lebanon and move back to St. Louis, my birthplace, where I transferred to UMSL. The challenges of adjusting to a new university, making new friends, and finding the most effective study strategies arose again. On top of that, COVID-19 hit, and it hit hard. During that time, my biggest challenge was my mental health. Spring 2021 semester was - to put it bluntly - hell. I had at least three anxiety attacks a

day, and my anxiety kept me up at night. With the lack of sleep, the stress of my educational career seemed unbearable. It took me months to see a therapist. After working on my anxiety with a therapist for several more months, I regained my mental health. I began to sleep better, study more efficiently, and leave my house more often.

What I am saying is that students, especially those at UMSL, come from all walks of life; students bring their own life experiences and backgrounds into the classroom. A major lesson that I've learned during my time at UMSL is that you never know what someone is going through. For that reason, I believe that faculty can benefit by building relationships with students and learning about their personal lives. I also believe that having grace and sympathy for students is vital to their success, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Both faculty and students have lives outside of class, which can cause distractions that impact learning. I have first-hand experience of how trauma can interfere with learning. During the last semester I spent in Beirut, Lebanon, I was completely distracted by the chaos happening in my direct environment, and to this day I cannot remember a single thing that I learned at university that semester. To make matters worse, the professors in Lebanon were too overwhelmed by the large number of students in each class (often over 300) to even realize that I was struggling. Sitting in the lecture halls back in Lebanon, I felt like I was just a number. (It didn't help that I had to write my ID number on tests, instead of my name.) Moreover, it was nearly impossible to develop a relationship with the professors when I never knew if I would be able to travel to campus safely or not.

However, when I transferred to UMSL, I took Professor Jennifer Nolan's Introduction to Anthropology course my first semester, and from the start, I could tell how passionately she felt about getting to know her students on an individual level. She made me feel recognized, valued and appreciated. I was in

shock at first that the professor knew me by name, but that held me to a higher standard, encouraged me to participate in class discussions, and motivated me to come to class better prepared. Professor Nolan's class changed my perspective on education. I no longer felt like a number, I felt like ... well, me. Professor Nolan also understood that students cannot always grasp the material in a standard way. Some need more personalized instruction that applies to their everyday lives. For that reason, she encourages students to share their experiences on the class discussion boards. For example, Professor Nolan included an "Optional Section" below the module's assigned discussion board where she wrote, "Students are encouraged to share their life experiences related to these topics, either as an additional paragraph or in the peer replies." Being given the option of incorporating personal experiences empowered me to pull material together in a way that related to my life journey.

After having Professor Nolan as a professor, and building a relationship with her as a student, she nominated me for the Active Learning Assistant (ALA) position for her Anthropology courses. I joined the ALA program to support her courses and give back to my fellow students. The ALA program gave me everything that I didn't even realize I was missing. It helped me in numerous ways, from having a support system that I could rely on to having a community where I could be myself on campus. The ALA program also allowed me to give back and help students who may be struggling in their personal lives or their courses. In all, joining the ALA program taught me how to be flexible and supportive with students inside and outside of the classroom, and how to be there for students as whole people, not just numbers.

My life experiences shaped me into the person I am today. The situation I lived through in Lebanon created fear, and that fear then created trauma, and the trauma impacted my ability to learn and my perception of education. I wouldn't be the person I am today if it weren't for the welcoming environment at UMSL,

where professors know me by name, want to build relationships with me, and encourage me to express my individuality in the classroom. It's those little things that matter the most and can alter a student's path in life.

Additional Resources:

- ["Tips for Learning Students' Names" from the Eberly Center at Carnegie Mellon University](#)
- ["Life in College Matters for Life After College" by Julie Ray and Stephanie Marken](#)
- ["Trauma-Aware Teaching Checklist" by Karen Costa](#)

CTL's Lunch and Learn Series: Open to All Members of our Teaching Community

The CTL started a Lunch and Learn Series last fall, featuring faculty that completed the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) "Effective Online Teaching Practices" program. This year we aim to continue the program featuring innovative faculty from across campus.

Back by popular demand, we offer a virtual Lunch and Learn series one Friday per month featuring innovative faculty from the UMSL teaching community. Two faculty present their context, how and why they have implemented a particular strategy, its impact, and how they plan to iterate. Participants then can join faculty in a breakout room to ask questions about the strategy. It is a great

opportunity to learn from and with colleagues and meet new faculty across campus. All members of the UMSL community (faculty, staff, and graduate students) are welcome to attend.

Event Details:

- **Date of the next Lunch and Learn:** October 14th, 12:15 - 1:00 PM
- **Presenters:** Deborah Cohen (College of Arts and Sciences - Department of History) and Meghann Humphries (College of Arts and Sciences - Department of Biology)
- **Topics:**
 - Students not reading intro materials? Not following instructions? Waiting till the last minute? Try advice from previous students
 - Alternative Assessments in Upper Level Biology Courses
- **Location:** Virtual (see Registration below)

If you have any questions, please contact CTL Assistant Director Erin Whitteck (elwbcf@umsl.edu).

[Register here for the Fall 2022 Lunch and Learn Series](#)

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Register below for an information session

Choose to join one of our info sessions on either October 10 or 11 to learn more

Over the past three years, the Center for Teaching Learning has offered faculty learning communities (FLC) on different topics that arose from the curriculum alignment process (CAP), such as introductory statistics, transparency in learning and teaching, and foundational STEM teaching. A new FLC will launch in January 2023 about culturally responsive teaching.

Dr. Courtney Plotts of the Council for At-Risk Student Education and Professional Standards (CASEPS) recently shared her expertise about culturally responsive teaching with our campus at our Spring Forum of Teaching in 2021 as our keynote speaker. There was a lot of interest in her presentation and workshop, which caused us to pursue a further partnership and offer a faculty learning community about the topic. We are excited to announce that we will soon be taking applications for a new faculty learning community from January through December 2023.

What? A cohort of 8-12 faculty members will learn from and with each other about what it means to be culturally responsive. [Faculty will also be able to achieve a culturally responsive teaching certification from CASEPS.](#)

Who? Faculty from across UMSL in all disciplines and ranks are invited to participate. The faculty learning community (FLC) will be facilitated by CTL Assistant Director Erin Whitteck.

When? The group will meet monthly from January through April 2023. In addition, on June 13-14, all FLC participants will complete a culturally responsive teaching certification through the Council for At-Risk Student Education and Professional Standards (CASEPS), where they will learn about strategies they could implement in their courses. In Fall 2023, participants will

again meet monthly through December 2023 to implement culturally responsive strategies in their courses and get feedback from their peers.

How? Meetings will be a mix of virtual and in-person. The CASEPS certification will be in person.

Participants will be compensated for the completion of the program. If you are interested, please register below to start a conversation about the possibilities of this opportunity. Applications will open at the end of October and close in mid-November.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please reach out to CTL Assistant Director Erin Whitteck at elwbcf@umsl.edu.

[Register for an information session about the Culturally Responsive Teaching Faculty Learning Community](#)

Save the Date from 12:30-1:30 PM on November 10th for a conversation with the Anti-Racist Educators Group about Land Acknowledgments.

About the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), a division of the Office of Academic Affairs, supports the professional development of those who teach and learn at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Our goals - to promote engagement in courses, on campus, and in the community - enhance the University as we align our activities, services, and consultations with the campus goals to promote excellence in teaching, research, and service.

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