

Teaching UC Merced students in the time of COVID-19: who, why, and how of engaged teaching (abbreviated)

Compiled by UC Merced faculty and staff on the Instructional Resilience Task Force, May 2020

Because of the particular challenges UC Merced students will face in AY 2020-21, we need to prioritize keeping our students enrolled at our campus and engaged in our classes. We can do this by keeping in mind and doing the following:

1. **Learning is social** and students need to feel they are part of a **community**.
So: Foster a nurturing environment, build trust, and facilitate peer-to-peer learning and social interactions between your students.
2. Students must feel **safe and confident** in order to learn.
So: Foster positive emotions. Give encouraging feedback and show students that you care about them.
3. Students grow when their **learning is prioritized over assessment**.
So: Assign low- or no- stakes assignments and encourage curiosity and creativity.
4. Course design should be **coherent**, use **appropriate technologies**, and be as **predictable** and **manageable** as possible.
So: Organize the course in predictable patterns of instruction and assessment; choose appropriate technologies when needed; and provide lower tech options. Do not assign more work in hybrid and online learning than you would face-to-face.
5. **Flexibility** of learning and assessment options best respond to students' changing needs.
So: Be flexible with due dates and assessment formats and be responsive to students' circumstances.
6. **Clear and frequent communications** alleviate anxiety and increase the likelihood of success.
So: Make expectations clear and reiterate them frequently. Be transparent about your teaching.

Put even more briefly:

Create a nurturing community for your students, allowing them to feel safe and confident enough to learn.

Prioritize their actual learning over assessing that learning.

Create courses that are coherent, predictable, and flexible, using appropriate technologies.

Communicate clearly and frequently.