

Training Session

Hello everyone. My name is Susan Pennestri at ITS and I'm here with Janet Russell. We are pleased to bring you today's session: Community Building Strategies, featuring two panelists, uh, each sharing their strategies. Um, with us today are Nicholas Ball. He's Pomona faculty in chemistry. And then we have Jessica Tinklenberg, a program director at the center for teaching and learning at Claremont. Uh, Nick will be sharing how he uses Slack for student connections and Jessica will talk about the power of weekly check-ins with students, um, which is great. So, before we hear from our panelists, let me just cover a couple of logistics. Um, we are here for about an hour, so most of the time will be just spent hearing from the two panelists, hearing from you all, uh, participants. So, you know, we'd love to hear your strategies and ideas. Um, we can get into a discussion, and then at the very end, we'll just close up with some final remarks.

And, um, and I just wanted to point out this, uh, some feedback that was received from a student here at Pomona. Um, last fall, ASPC conducted a few surveys, and so a lot of information came from those surveys. And I'm sure you all have heard, um, some of this as well, but, um, this is just one very representative statement and I thought it was pretty timely to add to, to this session, since we'll be talking about how to build and maintain community with students. This is something they really are asking for, besides letting us know that they're Zoom fatigued. There's a lot of, um, course load, right, to get through, um, building community. And the sense of belonging is also, something that they have, um, kind of expressed. And so, today's session, hopefully, we'll get some great tidbits from everybody and, you know, be able to use some of this in the spring semester.

Um, and then in terms of just some housekeeping, I just wanted to mention that this presentation is being recorded. I've also enabled the captions. So, if you want to see them on your end, you'll need to, uh, enable them through the live transcript on the Zoom toolbar. And just, you know, let's keep it informal. We're a small group. So please jump in. Um, if you can stay muted while the presenters are speaking, but if you have a question, you know, just let us know through the chat or get our attention and, or jump right in. That would be great. So, we'd love to hear from all of you. And so now, um, I think it's time to pass it over to the panelists.

So to begin is Nick. Oh, you're muted. Nick. Haven't started this semester yet. So, thank you all for coming and thank you, Susan. And, um, Janet for the invitation. So, I'm here just to talk about Slack and, um, kind of the ways that I've been using it, um, in my class. And this is probably let's see, I started using it in about 2016 and 17. So this is, ah, year five for me in using it. Um, and just talk about some of the strategies that I've implemented in, um, making sure that we formed community as, also as a communication as well. Um, for those who aren't from, "What is Slack? What is this?" You know, is really interesting. There's an organizational tool that's called Slack, which

is kind of weird terminology, but really, it's kind of a, um, a centralized communication tool. And so that all conversations can happen in one unified place.

And, um, it's very useful for kind of team and project-based endeavors. So, if you have a class is great to have like a class-wide Slack with different projects or different kinds of, um, subgroups, you can have. It's just an easier way to manage that. Um, and it's a bit more user-friendly, um, versus some aspects of Sakai. And then for me and actually everyone in this room, we get emails all the time and, you know, Outlook and Mail and all of our programs kind of do these really weird nesting things. And it could be anything short of a nightmare to kind of follow up conversations. So, for those of us who are really good, maybe with like text group chats or things like that, well, it's just a really alternative, um, excellent way for email. And it's a great way for me to kind of separate, um, kind of caused business and personal email from the class. Cause you usually, when students are emailing you, that gets in the mix and, you know, you may just, I noticed this over the break. I've completely missed students' emails, um, from that. So, uh, it's kind of a really great way to do that. And in any time you have a question, please feel free to unmute or raise your hand. I don't know if I'll be able to see the raise hand function, but just feel free to interrupt, um, and insert your question in there.

So, um, why Slack and not Sakai or email? So, um, what I think we've learned almost for, it's almost a year now, is that online learning is, is exhausting. Okay. The face-palm on the laptop. You're tired. And there's physical strain, mental strain, emotional strain, and isolation. So, I'm, as we're seeing, um, not only with students but with, with ourselves, we kind of really miss that community aspect and a way to really kind of, um, uh, facilitate that is kind of, it's really hard to do that through email and Sakai. Um, listen, lessons with patience with Sakai. Okay. And so, um, and then also students have also said, and, um, the ASPC, um, report that came out at the end of last semester, said, students hate, hate, hate, hate having multiple platforms in communicating and it can be incredibly exhausting. And so, um, you know, emails are hard to keep up with. Conversation mentioned that earlier.

Sakai community boards are great. They have, uh, people use them quite a bit. Um, but there's just some, media and some sharing things that can be difficult. And also, if students want to have their private own thing, they have to use something else. And so that's kind of, what, that's kind of a limitation to it. Um, and, um, has a typo in there, that should be the... Okay, but anyway, so, but messages, um, can be muted. So, we'll see with Slack, you can say, "Oh, I don't want to hear anything." Nope. No notifications from this time to this time. You, um, as the administrator can do that, or students can do that themselves. So that's kind of a really good benefit of Slack. And so, how have I used Slack in the, in the, in the past? So, um, I started using it in earnest. I used it one time in 2016, but from my classes, and from the 2017-18 year.

And, um, you know, it was with organic chemistry. So, for those who aren't familiar with organic chemistry, it is one of those classes that are needed, is needed for pre-med, to go to medical school. And if you have yet to be blessed with the opportunity to meet a pre-med student, they are, um, they require a lot of attention. So, so it's just, you get a whole bunch of emails and this, this overall anxiety when it comes to the class. So, um, and what I was seeing is that some students would just fall through the cracks. And that's not for lack of effort. Um, but it's just very hard. And then you just try to manage having a community, even in person at that time. And then a way for students to interact. And what students were having was their own private group chats with friends that they knew.

But if you happen to not know anyone in the class, you were kind of left out of that whole situation. And so that was kind of the impetus behind that. Um, what was really nice is that, uh, I could communicate with students all the same time. So, I'll show you a tool that you can use. Um, that is really great for that. Then it also allows for private spaces. And students can share files really easily. They can just drag and drop a file. And, um, what it does, um, is that I'll show you a feature. We can kind of search and kind of see all the files that are there. Um, and then students for me, see one thread. So, there's the official, O-CHEM announcements one. There may be an organic meme one or something else that folks look at. Um, but, um, they can see it and see this one thing to look at.

Um, what was really nice, if a student sends me an email, they may hear from me right away, depending on where I am, they may hear from me a couple of days later, or I just completely forget about it. And so, um, what is really important with using Slack is if I say that's my primary way of communicating, it was really important for me to have behavior that symbolizes that. So, for example, I responded slower to email versus Slack. And, you know, and then I wasn't a complete, you know, I wasn't that mean. So, what I would do is I've got an email during Slack on, if I got an email, I would respond to them on Slack and just remind them like, "Hey, you know, this is just, you see how quick and easy this was?" This is a quick and easy way to kind of respond. If, um, if I got it, if I get an email and I didn't quite hear from, I'd respond on Slack and didn't hear back from them, as I say, okay, well, I copied what I put on Slack.

I sent them the email and just gave them a, you know, just test the temperature. Um, are you on Slack, or is it, you know, just kind of show them that this is the way to do that. And now that things are completely online, um, it's really great. Cause I, I use, I lecture, I have, um, uh, meetings with students and I take notes. And with Notability you just, a couple of clicks and it's uploaded to them, it's, sent it, sent it directly to them via Slack. And they have a whole thread; it's super easy for them to look at. And then students were free to create their own channels. There are probably conversations I had no idea what was going on. And that's fine. Um, but they only, they had their own channel. I think that is, is, is more recent. And I cannot remember the term or the law, but when we send, students, there is a reason why we're told by the college to send communications to students through our official email. There is like a whole privacy kind of thing with that. Slack now has that protection as well. So, if there is communications you have, it is archived. So those communications you have with your students is backed up and you're not kind of, kind of left off there.

Um, so I'm just going to give you a tour, just a really, really quick tour. My Slack desktop looks really, ah, complicated, so I have a lot of different channels and things, but I just want to show you an example for what happened this past semester. So, this is, um, last semester I team-taught a class of 86 students. 86 students who, um, perhaps had a, nicely putting it, a heterogeneous experience in the springtime when it came to online learning. And so, there was, um, they really needed a solid experience this semester. It was, I really want to make sure I did super well. It was 86 students. This is probably the second time I've taught this many students at the same time. And what we did is that we had different channels for different purposes. And I'll show you, I'll go through some of them with you. Um, and then, um, so with that, if you don't mind, I'm just going to give a pause and see if folks have any questions, and then we can go to a demo.

Nope. Nick, what was that note-taking app you said you used? Notability. Thank you. Anyone else got any questions? Okay. I am really good with pauses. So, the past

semester, so I'm going to go ahead and, um, get out of this, this PowerPoint. Okay. And then I'm going to show you kind of my Slack page. Okay. So, this is my Slack. Yours is going to look a lot more streamlined and not a whole bunch of things, but this is, um, since I'm in division two at Pomona. Division two has its own kind of major Slack mega-hub. And then what we see here are the different channels. So, what I did is that I organize the channels by different things. So, for example, this is the new Slack channel for my class, my organic class, this semester. These are workshops that I was a part of, um, over the whole summer. And then, and then right here, organized all the different channels that worked with my organic class last semester.

So the first channel we're going to look at is Organic Announcement. So, this is just kind of some examples of how we were able to give links, able to give, um, give communication to students. And, uh, it was really nice to say, if you use the @ channel, um, symbol, before you send out a message, it sends a blanket, uh, message to everyone who subscribed to that channel. So, you know, students are like, "Oh, I didn't get it." It's like, well, I know you're probably checking Instagram and Facebook and get that little notification. I, it's, it's there. Okay. Um, another thing is, you know, students can respond and say, okay, I've heard it. I loved that. That's great. And then, um, there was a question about an exam that I had. Um, you know, students were able to respond to that as well. Okay. Another cool thing that I think is really nice is that, you know, you're like, "Oh, I got all these different things." "How do I, um, how do I find a message that professor Ball sent a long time ago?" So, what I do, what they can do is they can go to organic announcements.

If they type in...organo, or no, organic announcements, orgs announcements, and then they can probably have a tool they want to see if I, something from Ball, so they can say, "Oh, okay, I want to find something that's from professor Ball." If I click on that, it just kind of gives all the different messages. And then it can be different if I shared it from different people. So, there's a way to kind of share all that information. Then another thing I think, um, is, um, helpful as well, is that, um, it's nice to kind of have different channels for different purposes. So, you know, it'd be, we, those, it was incentivized for students, if they have a resource that they found online that was helpful for them to understand that concept, to share it. So, we had an Organic Resources. So, you wouldn't notice there's an icon that's locked here. So, this channel it's only for students who have wanted to be a part of the class.

This is a channel that really anyone could have signed up for. It was public. And so here, you can just see some examples of students kind of sharing kind of their experience and something they found. And you see that it has a really nice, um, link. It gives you a preview for YouTube. There's a lot of great, um, a lot of great, uh, embedding and multimedia that you can do that would've been just a little more difficult with other platforms. And of course, something fun. There was an organic meme, kind of a channel where students put up kind of cute memes and had, had a good old time. So that was a kind of a nice way for them to kind of blow off some steam. All right. So, I kind of want to pause with that. Um, anyone had any questions?

Nick, did you get any pushback from students? Were they like, yeah, I get it. I'm on it. Yeah. And I can, I'll talk a little bit more about that a little bit later, but I do think there was some fatigue, right? So, there's a, there's a threshold where Slack can be almost like getting the email thread. Like, "Oh my God, there are so many things to look at." Um, so there was a couple of things that I did. One, if a student had limited internet access, it was super, super slow, but emails work, and I was like, that's fine. We'll just communicate through email. That's cool. Another thing that I did for students is that on

the, I took Katie's advice, made different lesson plans for every week. And so, if there were announcements that were missed, I just had a running Google sheet for every week, so they can kind of see those announcements. So, um, when it came to course content, everything was on a, um, Sakai lesson for each week. And if they happen to just miss an announcement, they know that it's there. Uh-huh. So, I, I use that. And then I also use the pinned function. So, it was really nice with the pin function is that students can, um, so you just click this little pin there, and really important messages. They, they'll just know that they can just kind of look, that, at the pin and it's chronological.

Thanks very much, Janet. Anyone else have a question? So... So, one thing I did is that I asked Susan if I could use her as a guinea pig. So, I just wanted to show you how messaging works. So, um, so say, I don't know who else, I, this one, someone, I want to message. I'm not quite sure who, I'll just type in. So, if they're a part of the whole Pomona Slack, they will pop up here. So, I'm going to write a message to Susan. We've already been chatting beforehand. That's great. And then I want to type a message here at the bottom. Okay. Great to see you today. And it pops up. Right. And then Susan, on, on her end, if she wanted to, she could hit the emoji. And, oh she's typing. You can see she's typing.

Yes. Great. And you see how in one spot, it's divided by, by date, it's divided by, um, so with a student, you can see all the communication that you have with a student at a given time. Okay. I won't, I'm going to press the button. Susan don't answer. But if you, if you want to, if the student wanted to have a video chat with you, instead of having to bounce between Zoom and Slack, you can quickly call them up. It won't, we won't have her do all that, but it works very similarly to Zoom. And you can say, "Hey, you know, can we just, is it okay if I video conference you really quickly?" And if they can do video, that's fine. They can do audio, but then you can kind of have, have this conversation all at the same time. So that way they won't have to log into Zoom and take on more bandwidth and do this at the same time. You can just talk to them verbally at the, um, without having to deal with the issues that come with Zoom.

Okay. All right. Just take a little pause here. Folks have any questions or anything like that? I don't really have a question, Nick, so much as a comment. Um, one faculty member did ask us for a backup plan, like if Zoom goes out. And, um, you know, the only thing I could think of was to do just what you did. You can do a group call, but I think the limit is like ten or something like that. Uh, but so just for the folks here, I mean, at least you could get out the message of let's just quit going. You know, if you needed to have synchronous time with them still, you could do it in small groups. Cause otherwise, we don't have, um, a backup for, for Zoom. So just noting that. Uh-huh.

Thank you, Janet. And you can also share screen just like you would with, with Zoom as well. So, um, especially if you have small groups, for those who may be teaching, um, groups where you have like peer evaluations, or you are having readings, or you are having, um, group, ah, small group discussions, this might be a nice way to do that. And then students can annotate and write-in comments at the same time. Anything else?

Okay. Well, uh, that's the demo. Okay. So just some, some challenges and lessons learned, um, as we mentioned before, and Janet asked a very astute question, they can get overwhelmed, right? So, there are ways that you can incentivize that. So, for example, um, one year I said, you know, Oh, actually this past semester, I said, well, you know, if you share a resource with the class, um, that helps students, other, your other collective member (we call ourselves a collective) um, better understand

something, you get two points. Okay. So, and I said, only on Slack. So, I'm not checking where else! And trust me, ah, a lot of students, and it's so fun, ah, interesting. They could only do it three times, but you'd be amazed. Like students just kept sharing. Right. Because it was a nice way to kind of engage. Sometimes I do a call-in to check if folks are using it.

So I said, "Hey, you know, um, just want to check, make sure everyone's on board." You put in something silly and, you know, give me a thumbs up or whatever, and usually, that's a way to get people in. Um, there is a way that, um, Slack can send them an email notification, if something posted to your, your, um, to your channel. Uh, that's on the students. So, I'm sure there's a way to kind of, um, get that working on Slack. Um, as I mentioned before, I have a Google link that basically summarizes the weekly messages. And then, um, I purposefully, as you heard from the, um, kind of like the collective resources channel, but I, I, um, structured assignments that required them to use Slack. And each assignment can have a different channel. You can get rid of the channel and after a while. Um, um, but students will not want to use it if you don't structure some way for them to use it. Um, so, uh, ITS did a fantastic job having a really easy way to onboard students onto Slack and get them started. So that's the link at the bottom. And a great thing now that was different, probably even at the beginning of past semesters, is that most students are, are kind of already onboarded onto Slack. So, there is a smaller activation barrier for them to get started. Okay. Oops. Uh, yep. So, with that, I'd like to thank you so much for listening to me talk and I'll be more than happy to answer any questions you have.

Yay! Nick, I have a quick question. So, you know, when, when Pomona gets back to, you know, face-to-face classes, do you envision yourself still using Slack the same way or differently, or, or have you given that much thought? And... I think I will still use Slack as a way to communicate directly with students. I think I will still encourage them to communicate with each other with Slack. And I think the main reason I would say that is because when they have their own group chats, right? Um, A it's a different app for someone to do, not all students have unlimited data plans, they may not be in a place that, you know, so I think, um, an equitable way to do it would be to have spaces where they can openly talk to each other, openly kind of ask questions. Um, that's outside of this small kind of silo group chat thing. Um, what they don't know is that the chats are being archived. But anyway, so I, I do, I do tell them like, you know, this is akin to email. So, if you don't want something to be on an email server, you probably shouldn't use Slack. If that makes any sense. Um, yeah, so I think I will still, I would still use it hopefully. Um, I think as far as productivity teams, I also have like stuff with teams, teams tend to be, teams would probably be better for a department when it came to productivity, like sharing documents, cause everyone's using a Word or a Microsoft suite. Um, but yeah. Students are really, they're on board. Getting staff, getting kind of staff on board too, getting faculty to use it has a high threshold. Yeah, Katie knows.

Okay, great. Thank you, Nick. Um, anyone else wanna share out? Maybe if you were using Slack or thinking about using it? No. Okay. No problem. Well, so thank you, Nick. And, um, next up is Jessica. So, I'll pass it over to you Jessica. And you're muted as well.

So many things to do. Um, I'm, I'm just going to chat with you for a little while about, um, the importance of, um, making sure that your communication is going in three different directions. We're gonna talk about kind of this three, um, legged stool of, of effective communication, um, with students and how that builds community. Um, and

I didn't prepare slides, but I do have a document I would like to share if that's okay. Let's see if I can. Mmm.

Let it be a mystery. Nope. Sorry, just one second. I copied it, but then now it's been a while and so now it's not going to show up again. Um. Here we go. Let's try again. There we go. All right. Solid.

Can somebody give me a thumbs up if you can see that okay? Yeah, I like that. Okay. And I will also put it in the chat the same link so that you can have access to it if, um, if you want to review later for any reason. Um, so, but like I said, there's really, when we look at the research about what builds community in an online class, um, as it turns out there's really three pieces, um, that we need to think about. We need to think about faculty-to-student check-ins and that's sometimes what we think about. Um, we need to think about student-to-faculty communication. And then we also need to think about, um, student-to-student communication. And I'm so glad Nick kind of ended with that, um, about having back channels and, and, um, private conversations because it's actually critical to student community to have all three of these.

And if all of the communication is unidirectional, if it's, say only coming from faculty-to-students, um, students feel invisible and they feel like they're being told a thing, but they're not feeling like they're being heard. Um, experience, my daughter's a sophomore in college and she said like the greatest revelation of this last online semester was that one of her faculty members checked in and said, you tell me now what's happening to you so far, you tell each other what's happening to you so far. And she said in the previous, um, that March to May quick switch to remote education, nobody had asked her that. Right? Um, and so even though the classes were fully online, and she hadn't met her students, her fellow students, um, in person at any point this last fall semester, she felt more connected to them. Um, because that faculty member paid attention to all three aspects of, of, um, the, the sort of three-legged stool of, uh, building a community.

So I want to just mention some ideas really quick that might work. Um, some things to know about me: I'm pretty low-tech, no tech kind of girl. Um, I think that it, it does take time to teach students new technology and, um, we have to make a decision about how much time we want to spend, um, teaching students technology versus teaching them what's in the course. Um, and so I, I liked that, um, Nick said that if you're going to have students learn a new tech like Slack, um, that you give them some time to practice and some space to practice. Um, that said if, if you don't have that space and time in your class, um, I wouldn't suggest like adding a whole bunch of new technologies, right? Use the things that already exist that students are comfortable with. You can still build community that way.

Um, and then, um, so that's, I think that's a really important thing to, to know is that these are going to be pretty, pretty low tech. Um, all in all. Um, the other thing is I wanted to give you some ideas of things that you can still do after this online semester is over. If the universe is just in good, um, we will be back in person next fall. And I am hopeful. Yes. Um, that said you don't wanna invest a lot of time in finding new ways to do things only to have them not be useful to you, um, when we go back in person. And any of these things, you can still do, uh, with a face-to-face class, so to build community as well. Um, so like I said, a couple of things,

I'm going to make this a little bit bigger, ah, ooh, that's way too big. Um, like I said, um, one aspect of this is faculty-to-students. So, these are things that you're going to initiate and that students are going to receive from you. To, to let them know that you are a communication partner, to let them know that you, um, are there with them. Right?

Even when they can't see you. Um, I think it's incredibly important to send weekly notes. And this is something probably a lot of us maybe, um, realized maybe even a little too late was pretty important way of, of making sure students got the announcements. Right? Hey, don't forget this is due this week. Um, but also, it's a great way to say, listen, I am going to be a consistent presence. You can count on me. And so much of building community is about building trust. Um, and so weekly, regular students know what's coming kinds of notes that can be through the Slack channel.

It can be through, um, a quick one-minute video that you post. Um, it can be through, um, you know, email notes or, or notes through Sakai. Um, anything, one that students know that's where it's coming to, and I think that that was another really important thing that Nick said, is like, students need to know that this is your main channel for communicating these things. Um, and that also that it's going to be regular. Um, and, and if that is going to be the kind of first step, and so I gave some ideas here about, um, you know, different things that those weekly notes could look like. Um, I am a huge believer that this should continue to be a practice that we keep after the, after we're back face-to-face. Um, that, that letting students know that even when they're not physically in front of your face, you are thinking about them, that you are thinking about ways that they can be successful, um, that you're committed to that.

Um, and it doesn't need to be long. Nobody's asking you to make 25-minute productions. Right? Um, just a quick check-in video, as like I said, as low tech, unproduced, as possible, um, is really gonna help your students. And, um, and it's really gonna show them that you're a committed conversation partner. Um, I also think in terms of faculty-to-student check-ins, an early appointment is a really important faculty-to-student check-in. Um, this is, we know from the research, critical for first-year student success. Um, and especially in, um, in this particular scenario. Right? It's going to be extra important that those students aren't just disappearing before we ever get to see them on campus. Um, and so making sure that students schedule an appointment, um, telling them, you know, if you're going to, like some kind of Zoom office hour, or through your Slack channel. I didn't even know that was a thing. That's very cool.

Um, and anything like that, that's just a 10 minute, "Hey, you know, how's the first month of class been going?" Um, "Here are some things I've noticed about what you've been up to, to date." Um, this is, uh, this is you giving them some information that you have seen that they are being a successful participant in the class. Try to make these meetings as positive as you can make them. Right? Um, there's lots of time later for, you know, if there needs to be a come to Jesus moment. That's okay. Um, you can have those meetings later, but, but in this first month meeting, not long, again, not involving a lot of things, but just saying, "Hey, I've noticed you." Um, boy, that makes a difference in how, how students feel about one motivation, right, they're more, motivated, so we know students are more motivated to continue your class if they feel like their work is being recognized, which makes sense.

That's the way we all feel. Right? Um, but also in terms of their persistence and their, their desire to, um, to be successful and to engage. Um, and so, uh, those are two faculty-to-student things I think could work really well. Um, but obviously we want that communication, not just to go from us to them. We want them to have time that they can check in with us. I don't know if you've seen these, these are some of my new favorite things. These, which blank are you today? I've seen, which Prince are you today? Like Prince and The Revolution Prince. And then it's nine pictures of Prince and you get to pick which one you are. Um, which hedgehog cake are you today? Which llama are you today? It's that, the picture on that far right of the screen. Um, and as students are, are

gathering, especially if you're, if you're, um, having a synchronous meeting, um, just have them just post that on a slide and leave it up there. And then students can just type a number. You get really quick feedback. Um, if you get a whole bunch of number eights, right? We're, we're all stressed-out llama. Um, then maybe, maybe we should think about, okay, let's maybe readjust how much we're trying to do this time. That's really great student-to-faculty. Um, and especially... I'm not sure I knew that, that was the stressed-out llama. There might be some... I think nine is. I don't know. I think... That's true. That's a good point. That may just be confused llama, or this is the end of the week llama. I don't know.

Um, so, but, but it does give students a chance to get some quick feedback to you. That's really important. And especially if you act on it. Right? Um, if you have a, you know, a whole bunch of students who are saying the same thing, maybe say, okay, well, let's talk about why, you know, this is happening. That it, its, just take a couple minutes to do that, and then adjust accordingly. Um, students can't learn if they're stressed out, if they feel unheard, um, that's just not, it's not possible. It's not how learning works. And so, giving them a chance to, to give you some feedback, um, or similarly, what one word describes how you feel about X topic coming up. Um, for example, if I were taking O-CHEM, I would really want to have, like, I have several words because I did not do well in chemistry in college. Um, and, but it might be great to hear those from students and have them see each other's too. That's part of that student-to-student. So, you can put them in a world, Word Cloud, or they can send it in private chat, and then you can list them all out, um, on a slide or something like that, just so students can see, um, that you're attending to their feelings. Because the other thing we know about, um, effective learning is that it takes into account emotion.

Um, so that's just really quick student-to-faculty check-ins. Um, another thing that, um, helps build community and helps build confidence in learning is, um, some kind of monthly review. Um, students, can, you, you can use Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, Google forms, um, depending on what you feel comfortable with, just give students a quick link. Short, anonymous surveys about their learning to date. And this is really, really critical, important piece. That it's the, the short surveys, the monthly reviews are not, um, how much did you like me, right? It's not, it's not personality driven. Um, because those kinds of surveys don't actually give us, um, actionable data. Um, instead, we want them to be learning driven. So, um, engage their prior learning with a survey. Like what scares you, excites you, or motivates you to take this class? That's engaging what they know already about the subject. Or how are the problem sets or discussion boasts or weekly assignments going?

What might you want to do differently on those assignments in the next month to ensure you're learning your best? Right? So, it was focused on student learning. What are you most proud of? Again, engaging that affective dimension of learning. Um, we tried a lot of breakout rooms this month, how, how did that help your learning, or did it? You know, what changes might we make? Um, and it's always great when students hear that you tried a new thing and that you want feedback on it. Um, students, aren't given a lot of opportunities to talk about their learning, unfortunately. They get a lot of opportunities to show they've learned something or not, but not to talk about how that happened. And so, to say, "Hey, I am learning a new thing." "I tried this new thing this semester." Um, and I did it because I heard that this is a thing that helps students learn better. "How did it go?" Right?

Um, and the, and you can use these monthly. And then again, um, use that feedback to make little adjustments. You're not talking wholesale adjustments. We're

not asking you to reformat glasses, right, based on these things, but to show students that indeed, that you are a reliable, um, advocate for their learning. That is a huge thing in terms of building community in the classroom. And again, these are things that you can continue to do well after, um, the, we're past this online semester. Um, you know, you can start all your classes with which llama are you today if you want. Right? Just leave it up there. Um, uh, I'm, I'm quite sure there is going to be one after this week about which Bernie Sanders are you. Uh, if there isn't one already. So, so good times. Um, and then the last one, and then I'll, I'll, um, give us some time to chat about this.

Um, and I'm thankful because, um, Nick already mentioned a lot of these, which is so great. Please, this, please ensure that students also have a chance to talk to each other. Um, and that can be an, like, encourage them to say on the first day of class, "Hey, I want you guys to set up your own back-channel communication." Um, I, I encourage that. You're going to learn so much from each other. You won't even believe it. Um, group chats, Slack channels, anything that you do not look at. And tell them that too. Say, I'm not in this, because this is about your communication with each other. Um, and that's actually kind of important to students to know that they have your permission to do that. Um, and that you won't be checking on it because, um, it gives them a chance to say, "Oh, my students really my, my faculty member really does want me to meet other students and to learn from them." Right?

Make that very explicit. You're going to learn from each other. Um, and then, um, from there, you know, step away from it. Um, and, uh, again, this is, you know, and if one, but this was another thing that my daughter said in, in her, um, online semester, um, that was the, the faculty that gave them permission to set up their own back-channel lines of communication. Um, and, and then let it go, didn't interfere. Um, though she learned so much from those students because she had this, in other classes, she didn't feel like she had that avenue, or she didn't feel as comfortable, uh, setting that up, um, because they hadn't, there hadn't been this explicit, like, please do this. It's good for you. Um, and then, um, if you are using Sakai discussion forum, um, you may want to set up a, just a student lounge discussion, um, forum. And that, say to students, this is places for you to make announcements or get support from each other that maybe is a little more, I don't know, publicly kind of things. Right?

A quick check-in. And the great thing about this is this helps you cut way back on the number of emails you might be responding to. Right? If students can ask each other, "Hey, what was that problem set that we were supposed to do for today, for tomorrow?" I hope they're saying for tomorrow, at least for 15 minutes from now. Um, then, then that saves you, you know, 42 emails on that topic. Um, and so having that student lounge, and also it allows them to expand their vision of the community beyond just the walls of the class. Um, if you, if they say, you know, "Hey, I just wanted to tell you, the office of black student affairs is having X event, um, this next week, um, everybody's welcome," or right. Um, or the queer resource center is doing this event. Um, I hope you can join us or something like that. Um, it allows students to, especially students who for this year have not been on campus at all, right, to at least imagine the community that they're, that they can be a part of.

So those are some suggestions. Please don't try to do all the things. Um, just do a couple things. Um, but, but do you think in terms of the sort of three-legged stool, that there's, there needs to be space for you to communicate with students and in ways that build trust, for students to communicate with you in ways that, um, are open and, and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning, and for them to talk with each other, um, to ensure that sort of robust community that we're looking for. What

questions do you have for me? I'll stop. You all have that in the chat now, so I can stop sharing.

Go ahead. Some thoughts that I'm struck with is, I agree, all of that sounds fantastic and if I were in my ideal world, I would do every single one of those things every day. And I feel like the same things I ask of my students, because, you know, ideally, you've read the chapter before you come to class. And then after class, you look at the chapter again and you highlight. Like, there's all these things that would be ideal. And I have found it very rewarding at times when it's occurred to me to check-in with the student and say, "Hey, I really noticed your problem set got better since, you know, three weeks ago and I really want to recognize that." And I know that, that student answered, and it was meaningful to them. It really just made me feel bad about myself, that I didn't do that for the other 32 students. Um, so while I really want to do all these things, I also am thinking about how much can I expect of myself also in this pandemic. And if maybe there are some things that are, that you've noticed, so that other people have noticed, are the like key things to make sure I do, even if I can't do the other ones. Like what's my shortcut to success here?

Um, so yeah, that's, thank you. That's really important. And I, I'm absolutely with you, which is why I said, please, don't try to do everything. Um, and, uh, I, the great thing about the student-to-student conversation is that you can just kind of set it and forget it. Right. Um, and, and so that, that's one thing that's, I think pretty easy to build in that we maybe don't ever make explicit. That requires very little effort on our part. Um, uh, the other thing I would strongly suggest if, if nothing else that, um, that maybe, I don't know, you can find ways to combine two of these things. For example, if you're going to give feedback on a paper anyway, I don't, um, or a lab report or whatever we're doing, um, anyway, that instead of typing all that out, that you schedule a ten-minute conference with that student. And then you can do both, two things at once.

You can give them the feedback, they need to be successful in that assignment and you can do that, that check-in, that early check-in. Like, man, I really, I saw this improvement from this to this. Right? Um, and so thinking about ways that you can combine things that you're going to be doing anyway, rather than multiplying the work. Um, that can be, that can be really valuable to a student. Plus, the thing about, you know, sometimes written feedback, is from students, can't hear your tone. And so, and that's especially hard when they're reading electronic feedback. And so, um, it gives them a chance to, again, build that trust with you because they can hear that you're, been through, it's about what they're doing and that you, you know, you think that they can really succeed. So maybe, maybe thinking about some ways to combine things you're going to do anyway. Thanks. You bet! Yeah, please.

Hi, excellent, uh, presentation, Jessica. Thank you so much. Um, one question I had was, um, how important is it? And I think you mentioned this before, but what have you found some good ways in which, so for example, I would do the, the, they would have like anonymous feedback so they can just send in whatever. But then I also incentivize from them to just think about two questions every other week and actually gave points for that. And maybe that's what worked, but I was thinking about, what, when we get feedback from them, what have been some good kind of, um, maybe prompt questions that you may ask and, um, frequency. So, is it just open-ended whenever you think, or is it like, okay every week and you'll get a point for doing this? I want to hear some type of feedback.

So I don't, I think there needs to be a happy medium between, um, never and once a day or something like that, like too often. Right. Um, and so I think, um, every,

part of the reason is if you're just asking students for their immediate feedback on something that they just tried for the first time, or, or just learned for the first time, like, did it work to learn it this way? Probably the students haven't had time to process that, to think about whether it is successful. And so, making sure that they have, you know, a couple of weeks, um, between survey, um, prompts, um, and what, another thing that I think related to the first pretty question that's really important is that you use the, whatever, whatever it is you want to know, right, is this helping your learning? That's that, to me is the fundamental question that we should be asking our students. Right?

Is what we're doing here, helping you learn? Right? Um, helping you develop skills, dispositions, habits of mind. Right? Is, is that what's going on here? And, and giving students time to self-assess that, um, that's a huge, that's so valuable. A lot of, like I said, a lot of students haven't done that before. So, it may take a couple of times to practice, but whatever the information they give you, um, act on it in some way, which is why it's so important to focus on the, on the learning instead of like personality things. Right? Um, because I can't change that about me. I mean, I, I suppose if I worked really hard. Um, but I'm not gonna. Um, and so instead to say, "Hey, is this helping you learn?" You can meet some feedback. We can make adjustments to that. That's actually in, at least in terms of what we know about student motivation, that is more motivating than even points might be to, to this process. If they see that you act on the things that they're giving you feedback on, because you care that they're learning and being successful, um, that motivates students to persist. Um, so, so that's what I would say is, um, not all the time. Right? Give students a chance to reflect, but often enough that you have time to act on it before and always focused on things that are actionable, like, um, tests for their learning. Thank you very much.

I just wanted to chime in for a second and say that, um, in terms of like combining things, that's such a good way of thinking about it, Jessica. Thank you. And, um, I've had some success with that, um, doing breakout rooms, in, during class time and having the students discuss with each other what's working and what's not working for them. And then coming back and like reporting it out. Uh-huh. Nice. So then maybe they get like comradery, like, "Oh man, she's crazy." Like, and then one of them that's a little bit more like brave, or they can say people in my group thought this wasn't working that well, you know, and then another group might be like, "Oh, our group thought that too." And I'll be like, "Oh, that's so interesting." Look, it's like, let's talk about why. And, um, it's like, I feel like while we're doing a lot of things at once when we do that, we're, they're getting to spend time together and then they're talking to me and then they're getting to see me respond, usually receptively.

Right. Um, to what they're saying. And, um, because we're talking about their learning, it ties then right back into like the themes of the class. So, I might right away then be able to address a confusion. Like we had no idea what, like the difference between objectivity and subjectivity as you keep talking about it. Like, and I'll be like, "Oh my god, let's stop right now." You know, so then we can do it in that moment. And then that's like, what Jessica saying. And then they get so excited because I'm like addressing them right then, or I'll make a note and come back to it the next week or something, about something that was really important or mattered to them. And I don't know if this is good practice, but another thing that I do is I kind of give them feedback in class sometimes. Like I pop into their small groups, and I'll be like, "Oh my God, did you guys read Pepper's, blog posts this week, what?" Like that s**t was lit. Like, you know, and, um, and they love it. Like, I mean, I almost never give them written feedback. No that's okay.

Thank you. And, um, and then they see like, "Oh, I'm going to go look at Pepper's blog, because they are writing like an exemplary post, and I'm confused about what these posts are really supposed to be doing." You know? Um, and anyway, so yeah. Then I've gotten, like, I was nervous on what the new Pomona like feedback form when they said like, did you get like regular, meaningful feedback from your faculty member? I was like, I don't know if they did. And they all said they did. And I was like, um, yes! Okay. So, these seem somewhat more informal style ways of meeting with them in person and giving them the feedback verbally or whatever that was, that worked for them. So that was a happy result for me. Um, yeah, cause I, yeah, so those little check-ins, and also, I did them where I would just pop into the group myself and have them like, just tell me what was going on with them in small groups. And I would schedule it in. So, the workshop would be like 45 minutes, and I would call it a 15-minute movable interruption. I love to figure myself as the like annoying person that bothers them rather than some kind of essential figure in the class. So, then I would just jump into the Zoom in and be like, I'm here to bug you for 15-minute. What.

And you'd be great at this Nick because you're really comfortable with this like awkward pause. I thought you froze. I thought you froze. I thought your video froze for a minute. Cause I would do, I'll just sit there and there'll be like, well, like what do you want from us? And I'm like, mmm.

What do you want? What do you want from you? What are we doing? Why are we here? Ooh. You know? I'm like, and sometimes I would try to be organized enough to like, have a question. I should bring the llamas, but you know, the awkwardness of it, like, okay, yeah, this is awkward. Mmm-hmm. And like, if you're just quiet, someone will start to be like, well actually we had a question or, you know, this week sucks. You know? Or like you don't like, if it all like just kind of becomes. Anyways, those are my thoughts.

That was great. Jessica, thank you so much. Yeah. I, I thought, um, the whole llamas thing was great too. And I've definitely have seen that before and in different ways. Right? Especially at the beginning of Zoom, um, you know, sync sessions. For example, some way to do like a temperature check with the students. Um, I, I've, I've heard that they really appreciate that, and you know, whether it's a poll or whether it's using the annotate, having them describe, use one word about how you're feeling right now or today or whatever. So, these little like icebreakers, yeah. So, I thought that was great. Great to hear. So, alrighty. I think we're at the end of our time, but this has been wonderful. Um, please join me in thanking Nick and Jessica for sharing out today and presenting, and also thank all of you for joining and sharing. So...

See you, everyone. Good luck! Best wishes. Let us know if this is helpful to you. Go get them. We believe in you. Happy last day of freedom, I mean first day of class. Thank you. Bye-bye.