Teaching Tip Tuesday

Real-time Check-Ins and Assessments

Teaching is more than one-way flow of information from instructor to students. As we strive to orient ourselves as a "guide on the side," rather than as a "sage on the stage," real-time check-ins and assessments can help us center the student learning experience in our classes and provide a responsive framework that adapts to the student context. Below are some ideas for different ways to use real-time check-ins and assessments in your courses, with suggestions for less-serious, more-playful ways to incorporate them into your teaching.

Reasons for Check-ins and Assessments

Before implementing a real-time check-in or assessment, consider your goal. This determines the kinds of questions you ask, and whether you should use an anonymous input format.

- **Real-time comprehension checks.** These can be used to measure understanding in the moment. If the majority of your students is underperforming, you may need to adapt your teaching to review key concepts. Results of these check-ins may allow you to identify struggling students and connect them with help resources.

- **Stimulate deeper thinking and conversation.** By posing challenging questions that provoke thought, you provide a spring-board for engaging student voices, and empowering students to think deeply and critically.

- **Evaluate student well-being.** Students often respond to a variety of stimuli that are external to your course, whether those be things occurring in other classes, in their personal lives, or are related to current events. Their responses may be associated with stress and can reactivate past traumas. Demonstrating interest in and care for how the students are feeling humanizes the instructor, improves the sense of community in the classroom, and may provide information that affects assignment deadlines.

Ideas for Real-time Check-ins and Assessments

- **Zoom reactions and notations.** For online courses with a synchronous component, consider using Zoom annotation to allow students to mark key parts of a slide, or "stamp" a specific image. You can also use reactions or polls to indicate understanding.

- **Colored Cards.** Providing students with colored cards to keep in their folders (red/green) allows you to poll students at any time during the term. Students can use them to indicate whether or not they think they understand. This is good for concept checks.

- **Sticky notes.** Allow students to answer prompts by placing sticky notes next to letters on the board the correspond to specific answers. This is especially good in long classes, because it allows students to move around.

- **Use images instead of verbal answers.** Rating how they feel based on emojis or pictures of animals may add levity to well-being checks.

- **Microsoft Forms Survey.** Can be anonymized. Allows projection of class results. These are good for both concept checks and evaluation of well-being.