Why Course Design Matters

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University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)
Learning Analytics Defined

At its core, learning analytics (LA) is the collection and analysis of usage data associated with student learning. The purpose of LA is to observe and understand learning behaviors in order to enable appropriate interventions.

~Educause Learning Initiative (ELI), 2011

...the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and the environments in which it occurs.

~Learning and Knowledge Analytics Conference, 2011

Analytics without action is just analysis
The problem with grades is they occur too late in a term to be actionable.
Inspiration

This video of David Wiley’s 2/15/12 ELI keynote presentation has long since disappeared from this Educause site, but a few years ago, I made a copy of my own for my dissertation and eventual follow up.

https://youtu.be/nXlR9tgyZIk
A Key Finding: Student Tool Use & Final Grade Varies by Class

UMBC Course #1

UMBC Course #2
Course “Waterfall” Report

- Each Row = distinct student
- Each Column = a week in term
- Cut line = final grade
- Color density = time spent

LMS Course Design Archetypes

- **Supplemental**: high in content but with very little student interaction.
- **Complementary**: used primarily for one-way teacher-to-student communication.
- **Social**: high peer-to-peer interaction through discussion boards.
- **Evaluative**: heavy use of assessments to facilitate content mastery.
- **Holistic**: high LMS activity with balanced use of assessments, content, and discussion.

New Report Can Help Faculty Visualize Student Engagement

“Waterfall” course dashboard leverages student use of Bb LMS

DoIT has a new addition to our suite of data visualizations supporting course engagement/instruction and teaching: The Blackboard course "waterfall" report (UMBC von req’d if using off-campus).

As illustrated below, the waterfall dashboard summarizes student interactions within our Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) on a week-by-week basis. Each row represents a student and each column represents a week in the semester, with the density of an individual cell color representing the student's time spent in the Blackboard course that week. Each course waterfall is organized by the student's final course grade on the left.

[Link to DoIT post](https://doit.umbc.edu/post/136488/)
### Table 5.1: How faculty use an LMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Analytics Research &amp; Practice&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Blackboard Course Archetypes&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>User &amp; Document Management</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supplemental</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Content-heavy&lt;br&gt;• Low interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Auto course creation and enrollment&lt;br&gt;• Password-protected class &amp; group space&lt;br&gt;• Post documents, perhaps w/expiration dates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactive Tools</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complementary</strong>&lt;br&gt;• One-way communication via content, announcements and gradebook&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Social</strong>&lt;br&gt;• High peer-to-peer interaction through discussion board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Announcements&lt;br&gt;• Email, Messages&lt;br&gt;• Discussion &amp; Chat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evaluative</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Heavy use of assessments&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Holistic</strong>&lt;br&gt;• High LMS activity&lt;br&gt;• Balanced use of assessments, content and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Electronic assignment delivery &amp; collection&lt;br&gt;• Quizzing, surveys, online grade center.&lt;br&gt;• Adaptive release of content based on prior action or grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study

- Incoming college students are often unfamiliar with the differences between memorization and learning. They struggle with time management.

- Students are often conditioned to memorize information and reproduce it on a test. This leaves them unprepared for the rigor of college and often leads to cramming for exams.

http://events.umbc.edu/go/101268
Spaced Practice

- Encourages regular, smaller study & practice focused on promoting long-term proficiency and retention.

- Spaced practice (repetition) assignments were used in CHEM 102 in the 2nd half of Spring 2021.

**Goal**: Promote understanding and recall.
Key Decision

“What if students don’t know how to design their own practice?”

Carpenter decided to do so for them and made it “opt in,” which students chose in droves.
## All Courses by “Slope” (Tabular)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Term</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGL292, 3876, 59201</td>
<td>College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>Online Lecture</td>
<td>HOLISTIC</td>
<td>Fall 20</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>
All Courses by “Slope” (Visual)

Use this dashboard to examine courses in bulk and determine which courses exhibit a strong relationship between grade and activity.

Choose a “Visual” or “Tabular” view type. Visual shows the average count (events or minutes) by grade and fits a line through the A/B/C/F averages. The steeper the line slope, the stronger the relationship. The list is sorted by slope value.

Tabular lists all of the courses with a calculated slope value. In some cases, the slope is a poor estimate of strength of relationship due to data variances.

Color = Class Size (darker = more students)
Activity-to-grade Relationship ("slope") by course Archetype and Term
Larger slope means stronger direct relationship -- higher grade: more activity
Check My Activity (CMA)

- Launched in 2010.
- Lets students see their Bb activity compared to anonymous summary of course peers.
- Part of 2016 dissertation (n~2.7k FT freshmen/txfers in FA13/SP14)
- **Key finding:** students using CMA 1.5x more likely to earn >= C grade or >= 2.0 term GPA (p < .001). But only 54% did so. More info: [umbc.edu/go/cmafaq](http://umbc.edu/go/cmafaq)
- CMA Includes **opt-in anonymous feedback survey**, but never analyzed – until now.👍

Definitions

- **Hits:** Every time you view a file, post to a discussion, or read an announcement, that is considered a hit.
- **Rank:**
  - For Students: This is where your activity in a Bb course places you among all students in the course. It is NOT a grade, but a student with a higher rank is more active than one with a lower rank, compared to course peers. You will also see (by color code) if your activity is above, below or within 20% of the Bb course average.
  - For Faculty: This is where your Bb course’s average student activity places you among all Bb courses in your discipline.

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Takeaways

1. Be open to the use of students’ digital footprints as a proxy of their engagement, especially earlier in term.

2. Use big data for a “bird’s eye view” to study quantitative trends that warrant a deeper dive for qualitative insights among colleagues & peers.

3. The stronger a relationship between LMS course design and student outcomes in prior terms, the more reliable it may be for early warning and intervention in future terms.

4. Early, ongoing and consistent feedback to students about their engagement (e.g., course analytics, myUMBC “Check My Activity” tool) and outcomes/gradebook could be one of the most scalable forms of intervention and institution can muster.
Increasing Student Success: Measuring Faculty Impact
Decades of research has shown that high quality teaching is fundamental to student success.

Students perform better in their classes and have a better college experience over all when they feel academically challenged, connected to their professors and engaged in their coursework.

“Americans Value Good Teaching. Do Colleges?”
Beth McMurtrie, The Chronicle of Higher Education  Fall 2023
Agenda

• Welcome / Opening/ Context
• Strategic Collaborations-focus on IR/AI
• Highlighting key pilots
• 2023-24 SEP Overview
• Impact – Faculty and Students (Qualitative/Quantitative)
• Impactful Practices
• Biggest Takeaways
• DFW Impacts – Fall 2023
• What’s Next?
Strategic Collaboration

- **Faculty and Student Success**
- **Curricular Analytics & Course Insights**
  - Addressing curricular complexity; informing course transformations and outreach
- **Equitable Student Pathways**
  - Building data agency influencing curricular redesign, establishing equity scorecards
- **Classroom to Career**
  - Innovations building experiential learning into all degree programs
- **Faculty Communities of Practice**
  - Equipping faculty and enhancing the student experience
- **Faculty Mini-Grants**
  - Cultivating first-year student-faculty connections outside of the classroom
- **UTSA Thrive Initiative**
  - Developing student thriving pathways; reimagining student success
- **Pedagogical Partners**
  - Engaging students in the Student Experience Project

Engaging students in the Student Experience Project
Pilots to Measure Impact of Course Redesign, Faculty Development And Teaching Tools and Technology on Faculty Development

~ Adobe Research (Civitas) 6.9% reduction in DFW rates; between 7% - 13.8% increase in A, B (2022)

~ Academic Innovation Academy qualitative impact—better student evaluations; greater engagement (2022-24)

~ ACUE analysis (23-24); Experiential Learning: Faculty Mini-Grants and more
Implementing innovative, research-based practices to
• foster equitable learning environments,
• increase degree attainment, and
• enhance student success

Through SEP, we will focus on cultivating a sense of belonging, promoting growth mindset, and fostering learning mindsets to improve classroom performance and persistence to degree completion.
SEP CoP Components

- Community of Practice in Canvas
- Formative feedback for faculty throughout the semester (Ascend)
- Workshops and training for faculty
- Small group / cohort discussions after formative feedback phases
- Implementation / Action Plan assignment
- End of semester celebration
Engagement and Impact

SPRING 2024

- 29 Faculty in Community of Practice
- 100% Faculty used Ascend platform
- 48* Course sections with faculty engaged in SEP
- 2,450* Unique students enrolled in courses taught by SEP faculty participants
- 4 Learning conditions improved across spring semester

*Course sections and unique students to be updated after OIR factors in cross-listed
## Most Significant Faculty Growth Areas (Spr 24)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using Data</th>
<th>Using data (formative feedback) to inform practices and approaches in the classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting</td>
<td>Reflecting on your mindset and how it impacts students' classroom experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Applying strategies to enhance the student experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Spring 2024 end-of-semester survey
Faculty Experience
Quotes from Spring 2024 end-of-semester survey

"With participating in the SEP, I know the students better through the Ascend survey. Therefore, I can implement more relevant strategies to help students according to their needs."

"The biggest insight for me was the needs of our students. Many of our students are not secure in one or more ways, and so providing information about resources available has been one way I've tried to provide a great experience for my students."

"After SEP, I am much more mindful of student perspectives and modes of learning and consider these when I am structuring my classes."
# Student Engagement

## Participation Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Leads Participated*</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes Participated†</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollments Responded</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Responded</td>
<td>79%</td>
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</table>

*Class Leads administered 1+ Ascend surveys; Ascend notes participation when at least one class has had a 50%+ response rate.

†Classes with ≥ 50% participation
## Student Experience Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING CONDITION</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>RATED POSITIVELY ON LAST SURVEY</th>
<th>≠ FROM FIRST SURVEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging Certainty</td>
<td>All (2178)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Safety</td>
<td>All (2178)</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Growth Mindset</td>
<td>All (2177)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>All (2173)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Belonging</td>
<td>All (2172)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connectedness</td>
<td>All (2170)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Fairness</td>
<td>All (2169)</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UTSA provides numerous resources to help you through your college journey.

In this activity, you and your group will collaborate to design an informational flyer introducing the assigned resource to share with your classmates. You will visit the actual location (You will have to research to find it, but I did give hints on the building).

You will be taking a photo as a group to add to your flyer. Be creative – wear UTSA colors if possible! It is also important to add any links to websites and/or use Adobe Express to create a QR code that can be scanned by your classmates. Video Instructions (to follow).

Following the distribution of all flyers, a quiz will be administered to assess your comprehensive understanding of these resources.

BONUS: If you individually find a resource that is not listed that you think your classmates would find helpful as well create your flyer for bonus points. (You are allowed to do the extra resources listed as 11 Campus Rec.)
Kelley Reno | Social Connectedness Activity

For my final project, I decided to concentrate on social connectedness. The following is the plan that I implemented at the beginning of the semester. The Ascend survey throughout the semester showed an increase in percentage of social connectedness by implementing the following strategy of adjusting group sizes to no more than three students per group. Overall, this project has been incredibly beneficial to me as an instructor and our student’s success. I am very grateful for this opportunity and the cohort of professors. The following is what I implemented:

**Social Connectedness:**

1. Implementing smaller discussion group sizes (3 students per group instead of 6-8 students) in large lecture classes
2. Encouraging connections in the classroom between students and instructor
3. Using growth mindset by implementing new discussion questions to foster engagement
4. Using wise feedback from the students to implement new strategies from last semester

**Example Discussion Questions:**

1. What characteristics did you love most about your best coach/boss and what characteristics do you least like about your most challenging coach/boss?
2. What ways do you like to receive feedback?
3. What is the relationship between group cohesion and performance?
4. What your favorite team building activities and why?
Building Trust with Students

Pam Mahan
The Writing Program

Student/class Characteristics:
- Mostly first-year students
- Developmental—need individualized, targeted support
- Small class size
- About 60% have jobs

Problem: How to get students to attend student hours
- Residual fear from interactions with high school teachers (negative/critical interactions)
- General anxiety about meeting with professors
- Avoid help-seeking behavior

Before SEP
- Encouraged attendance to student hours or to make appointments
- Listen to outside concerns

Changes for SEP
- Required meetings
  - First semester: 1 required
  - Second semester: 2 required
    - 1st meeting: appointments through Canvas Calendar
    - 2nd meeting: students must schedule on their own
- Snacks (food insecurity)
- Distractions (to dissipate anxiety)
  - Legos, brain-teaser games
  - Photos (gives them something to ask about)
SEP Fall 23 Outcomes

SEP is one of the first communities of practice to show scalable impact on Student Outcomes

- Majority of first SEP cohort were involved in other communities of practice
- Faculty Champions
  - ACUE
  - Innovation Academy
  - Strategies for Inclusive Teaching Institute
SEP Fall 23 Outcomes

Of the original 52 faculty, 45 completed 1+ ASCEND survey impacting 3,914 students.

34 of the SEP faculty had taught the same course in the prior fall semester.

**Fall 2023 Course Sections with 1+ Ascend Surveys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Fall 2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Faculty</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Courses</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sections</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Distinct Students</td>
<td>3,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollments</td>
<td>3,792</td>
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</table>

**Fall 2023 SEP CRNs with Prior Fall Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Fall 2022</th>
<th>Fall 2023</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Faculty</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Courses</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sections</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Distinct Students</td>
<td>3,914</td>
<td>3,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollments</td>
<td>4,289</td>
<td>3,309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the DFW dropped 2%.
The community most impacted the students who would have Withdrawn from the semester.
SEP Fall 23 Outcomes

Engineering Integrated Design, Sciences, and University College observed the largest reduction in DFW. (-5%, -7% and -4% respectively)
SEP Fall 23 Outcomes

Observations on AVG passing credit rates by equity group:
Female +2%, Male +3%, URM +2%, Pell +2%, Transfer +1%, First gen +1%
Engagement and Impact
2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>52</th>
<th>88%</th>
<th>120*</th>
<th>5,606*</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty in Community of Practice</td>
<td>Faculty used Ascend platform</td>
<td>Course sections with faculty engaged in SEP</td>
<td>Unique students enrolled in courses taught by SEP faculty participants</td>
<td>Learning conditions improved across fall/spring semesters. 3 in Fall / 4 in Spring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Course sections and unique students to be updated after OIR factors in cross-listed
What's Next...building on pilots

- Continue to expand the number of faculty engaging in Academic Innovation Team (TLDT)
- 60% unduplicated faculty current participation (national average 25%)---strategically engage faculty to maximize impact; expand faculty communities of practice; expand financial support for faculty with innovative ideas that build in a specific assessment plan
- Launch new SEP Year 1 Cohort and design SEP Year 2 opportunity for 2024-25 academic year
  - Mentor Model and Students as Partners Model
- Focus on application of SEP practices broadly and build student community within classes
- Pilot impact assessment of Generative AI course transformation (Cybersecurity course) and other ed tech tools (virtual labs) (Spring 24)
- Pilot assessment of OER use in courses and student success (fall 24)
- Document effective UTSA-specific practices (OER / Pressbook)
- Work collaboratively to amplify the culture of measuring impact; expand capacity in IR and build skill in using data effectively in storytelling
- Enhance use of formative feedback and continue to build data agency