



Dear Colleagues:

Since the pandemic, there has been a heightened awareness of the need for flexibility in teaching and learning. At the same time, the structure of a learning environment is also important in helping to keep students focused and for teachers to ensure learning objectives are being met.

This issue will look at course design tools and methods that can support flexibility as well as structure.

From,
The Office of Instructional Technology, Design, & Assessment



Mission Statement

*Valparaiso University,
a community of learning dedicated to excellence
and grounded in the Lutheran tradition
of scholarship, freedom, and faith,
prepares students to lead and serve
in both church and society.*



10/19/2022	WA2 workshop with professor	WA2 Workshop (sign up/time sheet sheet on Blackboard)	Meet with professor at your assigned time
10/21/2022	WA2 workshop with professor; WA 2.1 Peer review	WA2 Writing Workshop (sign up/time sheet on Blackboard)	Meet with professor at your assigned time; Post J9

Flexibility in the Classroom

On assignment one in my CORE 110 class, I noted many gaps in the students' writing. They demonstrated a variety of different issues and I knew that if I didn't take time to address these issues, I would be setting up my students for failure on their second writing assignment. So, I decided to introduce some flexibility in the course schedule and not be quite as structured.

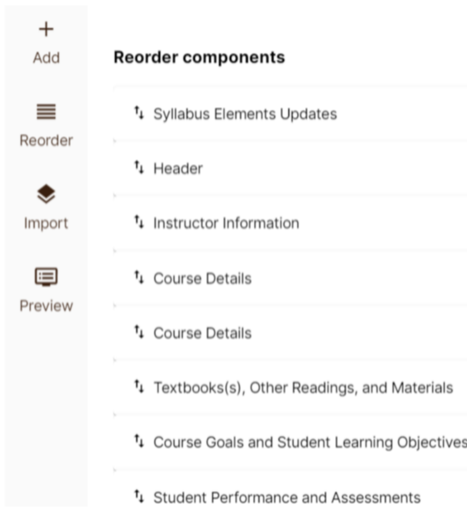
Deciding on flexibility over structure, I cleared a week from my syllabus to allow room for one-on-one personal writing conferences with each student. During the conferences, we discussed their biggest questions and the issues that I noticed. I noticed a huge improvement in their writing levels after the conferences were over.

Students noted that the classroom flexibility gave them "extra time to dedicate to their draft," "provided the ability to understand how they could revise," and that they would have rather had their syllabus interrupted for a week if that meant they "received a better grade." Don't be afraid to be flexible with your syllabus to meet the needs of your students!

*Written by Jordin Billings
Assistant Instructional Designer, Core Adjunct Instructor*

Making Room for Creativity

Over the last few months, I have been fortunate to meet with many individuals and departments, seeking feedback on how we can better support teaching and learning. A common theme that developed was the need for structure with programs like Simple Syllabus and Blackboard, while also recognizing the role of faculty to creatively engage students and present information in an interesting guided format.



These conversations have directly led to changes in the Simple Syllabus template, including the ability for faculty to reorder menu items and administrators to create custom course-level templates. The current master template in Blackboard will also be re-designed to allow faculty to more easily customize content, while still providing resources and best practice guides for new and existing faculty. Finally, we will be scheduling workshops for all interested faculty to learn more about making room for creativity in Simple Syllabus and Blackboard.

*Written by Ed Finn
Director of Instructional Technology, Design, and Assessment*



Unique Designs

- [Gina Rue, Instructional Designer](#)
Using tables, graphics & images in this creative design inspired by Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Associate Professor, Department Chair: Sociology and Criminology.
- [Jordin Billings, Assistant Instructional Designer](#)
Introduces media in her design including a short introductory video for Core 110.
- [JoEllen Green, Professor at Fresno City College](#)
Recipient of the syllabus influencer award for using colorful design and rich media in her class syllabus.

Faculty Log in to Simple Syllabus

Did you know there are two ways to access your VU simple syllabi?

- 1) [Blackboard Course Navigation Menu](#)
- 2) [Simple Syllabus Website](#)

Come to a Simple Syllabus Workshop in March

Led by Gina Rue & Jordin Billings, Instructional Design Team. Learn how to create, publish, view, edit, & print a simple syllabus. To view the schedule & register, [click here](#).

Course Style Options

Blackboard is a learning management system (LMS) that provides a structure for your course, but it also has features that make it flexible enough to fit you and your student's style. Use style options to control the appearance, theme, course menu style and layout, content appearance, course entry point, and banner image.



To learn more about Course Style Options, and how to **add a VU College Banner** to your Announcements header, [click here](#).

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