



dbenson@uga.edu

Drew Benson, Ph.D.

Drew Benson is an Associate Professor in Poultry Science in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. He teaches Introduction to Poultry Science and Avian Anatomy and Physiology. Over his 17-year career in higher education, Drew has primarily instructed small labs and lecture-based classes. He was a member of the original ALSI Cohort in 2018, an experience he regards as the most impactful of his professional career. Drew has served on the Active Learning Advisory Committee and is currently leading a Change Grant initiative aimed at increasing active learning practices within CAES. Additionally, he organizes and facilitates a workshop series for CAES faculty, supporting colleagues in the redesign of their courses to integrate active learning techniques. Drew actively advocates for the use of generative AI to create customized active learning activities and emphasizes developing assignments and projects that require students to engage effectively and ethically with generative AI tools.

Coaching hours:

Tuesdays: 9:00-10:00 AM and Wednesdays: 2:00-3:00 PM

I am excited to talk to you about:

Generative AI is a transformative force reshaping education. The key to adapting is active learning, which not only addresses the challenges posed by AI but is now also more essential and easier to implement with AI-driven tools.

Most Used Active Learning Strategies:

Case-based learning/Problem-based learning, Collaborate group work, Role-playing, Jigsaw, Flipped Classroom.

Biggest Surprise in Your Course Redesign:

The biggest surprise after implementing active learning in my course was realizing that it didn't come at the expense of content coverage—if anything, it expanded both the scope and depth of what I could teach. As I integrated more active learning strategies and found innovative ways to flip the class, I saw students engaging more deeply with concepts, applying them in meaningful ways, and retaining information more effectively. Importantly, I found that I was enjoying teaching more than ever—active learning not only transformed student outcomes but also revitalized my own experience in the classroom.

Most Meaningful Active Learning Memory:

One of my most meaningful active learning experiences was realizing that I could go beyond just teaching poultry physiology and management strategies—I could also help students understand the stakeholder perspectives that shape how the poultry industry operates. By integrating active learning activities that incorporated diverse viewpoints, I provided students with a deeper, more realistic understanding of industry dynamics. This not only enhanced their grasp of physiology and management but also fostered critical thinking, empathy, and appreciation for differing opinions. Seeing both an increase in student understanding and personal growth has been incredibly rewarding—it's a wonderful reminder of the power of active learning.

Greatest Triumph in Active Learning and Course Redesign:

My greatest triumph in implementing active learning has been experiencing real-time appreciation from students. While I've always received positive end-of-course reviews, I now hear immediate feedback—students stopping after class to say, *“That was fun,” “That was interesting,”* or *“I never thought about it that way before.”* Their engagement and gratitude don't just come at the semester's end but throughout the course. It's not about seeking praise, but rather about seeing the direct impact of my efforts in the moment. Knowing that students are not only learning but also enjoying and valuing the experience makes every effort I put into active learning incredibly rewarding.

Advice for Overcoming Roadblocks:

One of the most important aspects of implementing active learning is transparency—I'm a strong believer in TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching). If you openly explain to students why an activity is beneficial and how it supports their learning, they will be more willing to engage and invest in the process. Additionally, **leveraging generative AI** can be a game-changer in designing active learning activities. AI can help tailor activities to fit your subject, teaching style, class size, and even classroom architecture, making it easier to develop engaging and effective strategies. By being intentional and adaptable, you can create a dynamic learning environment.

Words of Wisdom:

As Linus Pauling said, *“The best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas.”* Generative AI is a powerful tool that allows us to generate, refine, and customize active learning activities tailored to our specific courses and students. By embracing AI's ability to rapidly produce and iterate ideas, we can design more meaningful and effective learning experiences, making active learning not just necessary, but easier and more impactful than ever.