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Melissa Landers-Potts, Ph.D.

Melissa Landers-Potts is a Senior Lecturer in Human Development and Family Science in the College of Family and Consumer Science and Assistant to the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion. During ALSI 2019, she redesigned HDFS (Hum Devel and Fam Sci) 2200: Introduction to Lifespan Development. This high-enrollment course serves as one of 4 prerequisite courses for the HDFS major and can also be used to satisfy requirements for Area V of UGA's general education core curriculum. Melissa has won numerous awards for her teaching. Most recently, she was awarded the inaugural UGA Award for Excellence in Teaching.

I AM EXCITED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT:

I would love to talk to colleagues about ways that I have preserved curricular spaces in my syllabi for flexibility to create and utilize new active learning opportunities for my students in real time as I move through the semester. I use TopHat in a variety of fun ways and can share examples or brainstorm innovative ideas. I also view my students as partners in learning in some ways and teach with transparency, which is associated with best practices in active learning. I would be glad to talk to colleagues about this as well. Finally, I am familiar with the literature demonstrating a link between active learning and support for all students, but especially students who belong to marginalized groups. I would welcome any opportunity to discuss the role that active learning plays in helping all of our students succeed and the literature that supports this finding.

OFFICE HOURS:

3:00 -4:00 PM, Wednesdays, October 19, November 16, and December 14, 2022 ([Zoom](#))

MOST USED ALSI CONCEPTS & SKILLS:

I have used the concept of incorporating some aspect or multiple aspects of engaged learning into every class period of every one of my classes. I had already been in the habit of incorporating active engagement, but it was not done in every one of my class periods across all my classes, nor were my activities intentionally planned using backwards design prior to my enrollment in ALSI.

MOST MEANINGFUL ALSI MEMORY:

There were several, but I would say what was most eye-opening to me were the activities in which we worked on our own class assignments or syllabi, then exchanged information within our small work groups. It was interesting to see what others were doing, and they always had some excellent ideas even though they taught vastly different subjects. I still incorporate some of the new activities I learned from members of my cohort into my own classes today.

BIGGEST SURPRISE IN YOUR ALSI**REDESIGN:**

I realized I had evolved over the years into subconsciously engaging in some elements of backwards design as I planned my classes, but I learned through our ALSI training that it was effective to use backwards design in a more intentional and systematic way.

GREATEST TRIUMPH IN YOUR ALSI**REDESIGN:**

After one “warm-up” semester of teaching my new redesign, my course evaluations for my large (200-person) course have consistently increased to 4.8/5 (from 4.6/5) despite the research suggesting that students often “fail to appreciate” active learning.

ADVICE FOR OVERCOMING ROADBLOCKS:

Don't feel overwhelmed or discouraged! Know that as you revamp or tweak each teaching module, you can gradually incorporate more and more of what you have learned over time. It took me two years to incorporate what I learned into all my other classes and I succeeded in doing so by chipping away at them each semester after I completed ALSI.

WORDS OF WISDOM:

Maintain contact with your ALSI cohort members. I have gotten so much out of my various fellowship experiences on campus in terms of the faculty networks that were created, and we have worked together on pedagogical research over the past several years to test out new teaching methods or hypotheses.