

Professor Corner

February 2021 Faculty Highlight: Debra Casey, Assistant Professor of Instruction, in collaboration with Kelly Grace, Assistant Professor of Instruction.

Department: Human Resource Management



Debra and Kelly's Tools for Online Engagement

Online Field Trip, Anyone?

- **Conspiring Faculty.** We noticed we taught the same class, different sections and that they overlapped for an hour. We decided to combine our classes for an hour to work on a class activity.
- **Prepare to Travel.** The week before the Field Trip, each of us prepared our students for the combined class activity.
- **Field Trip.** Combined classes for class activity and discussion for an hour, using 30+ breakout rooms and a Google Spreadsheet to facilitate large group discussion of the experience.
- **Fond memories.** In our next class, each of us reinforced key concepts and our students discussed their perceptions of the activity. Their reflections mentioned how helpful it was to work with students they did not know as well.

Conspiring Faculty.

- In comparing notes on our classes, we noticed we taught the same class, different sections and that they overlapped for an hour.
- We decided to combine our classes for an hour to work on a class activity. As this is a negotiations class, we conducted a negotiation simulation with Buyer and Seller of a used car found on CraigsList.
- In retrospect, this would have worked for any of our classes that overlapped in time on Zoom. Even if they weren't the same class, we could have devised a joint learning activity like a debate, a discussion, or other exercise with common learning objectives.

Prepare to Travel.

- Though it didn't take an enormous amount of time, we couldn't have done this "on the fly."
- After we discussed what we wanted to achieve, we divided up the work. Debbi wrote the activity and Kelly set up a collaborative Google Sheet and laid out our discussion points.
- We distributed the activity to each of our classes the week before our Field Trip so that they could prepare.
 - Debbi's whole class had the Common Information and some Private Information that only the Seller knew.
 - Kelly's whole class had the Common Information and some Private Information that only the Buyer knew.
- Each class planned, strategized, and speculated for the Field Trip the following week. This was particularly easy to do because we were "all on the same side." This strategy would be very helpful for those situations in which, as an instructor, you want to coach your students through a critical thinking exercise.
- We shamelessly stoked their competitive spirit and challenged them to bring their best to the combined class.

Field Trip.

- Kelly Grace drove the big yellow Field Trip bus to Debbi Casey's Zoom room.

- Debbi's class was ready for visitors – we had 37 breakout rooms and a Google sheet for debriefing ready to go.
- Before we went to breakout, we dropped the link to the Google Sheet into the Chat and emphasized that everyone needed to grab it.
- We had named the Zoom rooms with the last names of the students and let them “choose their own room” – i.e., the room with their last name in the title. We did mostly pairs (Buyer/Seller) but there was some reshuffling for students who hadn't made it to class.
- If we were doing small groups, we would have named the Breakout Rooms something memorable (foods?) Then we could have told students ahead of time what breakout room to go into. There was about five minutes of chaos, er ... we mean getting everyone fully settled. Overall, it wasn't difficult to get everyone into the right breakout room because of the co-host function on Zoom.
- We set the timer for 20 minutes and let them do their thing.
- We used a Google Spreadsheet to have them record their answers to questions we asked as they went through and concluded the activity
- At the end of 20 minutes, done or not, we all came back together in the combined Zoom room. We talked about what we saw on that combined results Google Spreadsheet, students and instructors weighing in.

Fond memories.

- Students reported that they liked working together as a class to go “up against” another class. This makes us think: debates!
- Students liked seeing the other breakout groups' results on the Google Sheet.
- We know it shouldn't feel like a “Field Trip” when it's online, but it did feel that way. We don't know why. Perhaps it is as simple as novelty. We were only in Week 3, with little class camaraderie, but there also seemed to be an identification with the class as a team.
- Whatever it was, we'd do it again. An hour was the perfect length.
- Maybe you could find a faculty partner and an exercise and give it a try?