

# ACCESS TO **EXCELLENCE**

A FACULTY GUIDE



*On this occasion* it is appropriate to acknowledge that UNO occupies the traditional treaty lands of the Omaha (Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup>) and Otoe-Missouria Tribal Nations. We would also like to express our respect to the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska, and the 170 plus other tribes represented within the Omaha area today.

# *Introduction*

“Access to Excellence: A Faculty Guide“ was developed by the Center for Faculty Excellence in collaboration with UNO faculty members with the intent to provide:

- Easy access to ideas and strategies to enhance teaching and learning and to strengthen UNO’s ability to educate all learners.
- Insights to advance faculty research and creative endeavors and elevate UNO’s commitment to scholarship and discovery.

You’ll notice that the content of the guide also supports UNO’s commitment to community engagement and workforce development.

It’s difficult to imagine that as a faculty member you won’t be able find **SOMETHING** in the guide to try or implement. I hope you do. Take a risk. Push yourself. You’ve got this.

Equally important, the guide represents the collaborative and collegial spirit indicative of UNO’s outstanding faculty. As I worked with our faculty contributors, I was inspired (not surprised) that every contributor was focused on you - their colleagues - and elevating your experiences as UNO faculty members.

I encourage you to identify **SOMEONE** who contributed their expertise to this guide. Email them and let them know you tried one of their suggestions. If you see them on campus, thank them for their support. Then pay it forward. Find a way to share your expertise with a colleague. We are better together.

As always, go be excellent! It is an honor to call you my colleagues.



Connie Schaffer  
Director, Center for Faculty Excellence

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# EDUCATING ALL LEARNERS

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DISCOVER HOW TO  
ENHANCE AND ENERGIZE  
TEACHING AND LEARNING

# Building Relationships with Students

## What

Building relationships with your students is critical to creating an inclusive, safe, and productive classroom. Getting to know your students personally and academically does not mean you have to sacrifice your high expectations. We fear that being too friendly can risk weakening academic rigor. Yet students want to know you care; they want the feeling that they belong at the university. This pays dividends. When instructors take the time to develop student relationships, the students report higher levels of academic progress, an increase in student engagement, and a willingness to take more academic risks.

**Developing student relationships does not take much time.  
It just takes a little intentionality and curiosity.**

## How

- Get to know student names and pronouns.
- Arrive early and stay after class to engage with students. Students may ask academic questions; it's also a good time to walk around and check in on them.
- Begin class with a question unrelated to the course content. For example, have students list one to three fun activities they participated in over the weekend. Have them share with a partner, then have several students share with the whole class.
- Have students develop a personal narrative PowerPoint slide or video. What are their favorite ways to relax, hobbies, and foods? Share one or two slides at the beginning/end of each class throughout the semester.
- Share your narrative PowerPoint slide or video. Students are curious about you. It makes you more approachable, and students may feel more comfortable taking risks if they feel they know and trust you.
- To build rapport, incorporate partner and small group activities during class.
- Consider creating videos of you teaching the course content, this will provide more time for small group interactions and discussions during class.
- Use emojis in your email. You can still be firm and hold students accountable while also showing empathy and perhaps humor. 😊
- Check on students by sending an email if they are absent. Always let them know you are there to support them.



**Always let your students know they must be prepared to share with the whole class.**

### References:

- Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach Like a Champion: 63 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College*.
- Lentfer, V. (2023). *Cultivating Compassion in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Thriving through Chaos, When All You Want to Do is Teach*.



**Vicki Lentfer**

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# Bringing Passion to Teaching and Loving your Pedagogical Journey



- **What is passionate teaching?**
- **How can it impact your pedagogy and student experiences?**
- **How do you bring passion to the classroom and teaching activities that are a core element of your academic work?**

Academic passion can be hard to hide. We love our disciplines! Yet sometimes as instructors, we struggle to bring this passion into the classroom or find it difficult to translate love for our field, research, or creative work into teaching experiences.

## Passion...

- is a state of positive emotion, inner motivation, and intrinsic drive that excites and brings joy to a given pursuit.
- in teaching is a beautiful experience that can elevate your instruction, bring tremendous satisfaction, and make each classroom and student engagement experience remarkably gratifying and positive.
- may even counteract the buildup of fatigue and job burnout!
- can also be contagious and an uplifting teaching mechanism for both teachers and students alike.

## Four Steps to Passionate Teaching

### Step One: Active Thinking

- Actively thinking about what brings joy and meaning to your work can play a major role in getting your inner passion front and center. It could be your research, the big questions that drive your scholarship, the creative outputs you tend to enjoy, or the joy and satisfaction student interaction brings to your life. Think about why you do what you do and what brings passion to your work!

### Step Two: Connect Passion to Content

- It may not be the most conspicuous connection (or it could be!), but attempt to relate what you found in step one to your teaching. Are there linkages that make sense? Does it relate to the content? Are there connections you can draw? Do they speak to each other?

### Step Three: Bring It to the Classroom

- Let your passion speak; tell students your story. Tell them why you do what you do, and what drives your daily work cycles. Get them interested in your research. Bring your research, your community engagement, and the questions you mull over into your classes. Let YOUR passion come through.

### Step Four: Add Your Personal Experience

- When you tell your story, encourage the students to do so as well. This shared story-telling and narrative-sharing builds deep connections for students! In turn, they spark your inner motivation and inspire you to go above and beyond as their teacher.



**Through a process known as emotional contagion, teacher passion may “infect” students who can begin to ride the waves of passionate pedagogy in their own learning, which could translate into overall more satisfying, meaningful, and impactful outcomes for their educational journeys.**

#### References:

- Ruiz-Alfonso, Z., & León, J. (2016). The Role of Passion in Education: A Systematic Review. *Educational Research Review*.
- Gilal, F. G., Channa, N. A., Gilal, N. G., Gilal, R. G., & Shah, S. M. M. (2019). Association between a Teacher's Work Passion and a Student's Work Passion: A Moderated Mediation Model. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*.



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# Interacting with Students

Consider these areas of faculty-student interactions. When implemented together, they can improve and streamline communication with students.

## Set Clear Expectations and Boundaries

- At the start of the semester, exchange preferred communication methods with students.
- Discuss communication styles and how these are impacted by generational and role differences.
- Post your preferred contact information in Canvas and note a timeframe in which you will respond to student emails/calls/texts.
- Set and adhere to office hours. Post them in Canvas.
- Practice work-life balance. If you set a precedent of responding in the evening, late at night, or on the weekend, students may expect this for future communications.

## Honor Student Questions and Your Time

- Answer questions when students are together. Answering one student in class may reduce emails from other students.
- Defer to a later time if needed. Answering questions right before or after class can be difficult and some questions interrupt the instructional flow. If a student asks a question at an inopportune time, tell them you cannot give the question your full attention now and suggest that they write it down or email it to you so you can respond as soon as possible.

## Understand Communication Styles

Learn how to recognize and respond to communication that may be passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, or assertive. The resources to the right can help you to learn more about these communication patterns.

Communication  
Styles  
[bit.ly/3UTwIzK](https://bit.ly/3UTwIzK)



Understanding Your  
Communication Style  
[bit.ly/3OrreNG](https://bit.ly/3OrreNG)



## Know When and Who to Ask for Help

- Acknowledge when you need to involve others to help students and familiarize yourself with campus resources.
- Access more information on this topic and other helpful resources on the UNO Center for Faculty Excellence website.

### References:

- Bain, K., (2024). What the Best College Teachers Do.
- Felten, P., & Lambert, L. M. (2020). Relationship-rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College.



**Connie Schaffer**

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# Communicating Without Apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) for students is normal. It may stem from a lack of experience in the type of communication you're using or a lack of knowledge going into a presentation. Symptoms may include a fast heartbeat, dry mouth, general feeling of anxiety, or negative thoughts.

There are varied techniques that may help alleviate a student's negative experiences. CA relief techniques do not have a one-size-fits-all approach. Those utilizing the techniques need to decide first how they experience anxiety, try techniques often and repeatedly, and utilize more than one technique. Examples of techniques include skill training and leadership assistance; diaphragmatic breathing (outlined below); systematic desensitization; muscle relaxation techniques such as pilates or yoga; cognitive restructuring (outlined below); positive visualization; and distress mechanisms. Visit or refer students to the UNO Speech Center for more in-depth training and support on these CA issues.

## Diaphragmatic Breathing

Known as "belly breathing", this technique uses the diaphragm, a muscle that can be trained to more effectively open our lungs.

Diaphragmatic breathing is essential for engaging in meditation, reducing stress levels, lowering blood pressure, and regulating bodily processes.

1

Get comfy! You can sit, stand, or lie down.

2

Relax your shoulders, roll them away from your ears.

3

Place hands on your chest and stomach.

4

Breathe in until you can't take in more air.

5

Imagine blowing through a straw as you slowly exhale.

6

Relax and repeat.

## Cognitive Restructuring and Imagery

- Turn those self-degrading comments into positive affirmations. For example, "I'm going to sound stupid." can become "I put in the work and know the material."
- Identify irrational fears (if I mess up, I will fail) AND rationalize that anxiety!
- To boost confidence, imagine your speech or speaking event/conversation going the way you intend it to with a positive response from the audience!

### References:

- Dwyer, K. K. (2000). The Multidimensional Model: Teaching Students to Self-manage High Communication Apprehension by Self-selecting Treatments. *Communication Education*.
- Fremouw, W. J., & Scott, M. D. (1979). Cognitive Restructuring: An Alternative Method for Treatment of Communication Apprehension. *Communication Education*.
- Additional references available upon request.



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# Loving Your Lecture

Lectures have stood the test of time, yet diverse voices are starting to question its effectiveness. In fact, some research indicates that active learning strategies are far more impactful than the traditional lecture format in achieving better grades and reducing the rate of failure. **Fear not.** The lecture remains a powerful learning tool.

The secrets to adding active learning within lectures are right at our (and our students) fingertips. Social media influencers on YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat know how to create content to engage their audience, so let's use their strategies to enhance learning and engagement in our courses. Let's create content instead of just lectures!

## Before you create the lecture content, ask:



1. What is the purpose of the lecture? What learning outcomes will be addressed? What will students walk away knowing and what will they be able to do with what they now know?
2. How will you start? How does the introduction of the content capture students' attention and engage them in the learning process?
3. How will you "chunk" the content, and how will these chunks connect and create a broader understanding of the overall content?
4. What are the primary chunks of content, and what keywords and analogies will best convey those chunks? What active learning activities will reinforce or elaborate these chunks of content?

## Tips to Become a Knowledge Influencer

### Organize around a story

- Relate to your experience, a case study, or a real-world question.
- Connect the dots to the larger story.

### Snapchat chunks content

- Use short (5 to 10-minute) chunks of content.
- What are the core ideas?

### TikTok and YouTube shorts can guide tone

- Deliver with authenticity.
- Students want to know you. Let your personality shine!

### As any influencer knows...

- Be conversational.
- How would you explain this to friends?

### #lovethislecture

- Reduce the complexity of direct, key concepts.
- What is the hashtag for this chunk of content?

### Relevant, concrete examples and analogies

- Make it real. Show them how this actually happens.
- All social media platforms are dominated by images and video.

### Emotions impact learning

- Learning happens when students feel comfortable and in control.
- Consider the emotional experience as well as content.

## Learning Activities to Intersperse Between Content Chunks

- Think-Pair-Share: Students think about a problem/question, discuss it with a partner, and then the pairs share a relevant point with the class.
- Spot Challenge: Invite students to provide their own examples or analogies.
- Illumination: Reflect on how to apply content in students' own lives.
- Practice: Students complete problems/assignments together in class.
- Backchannel: Simultaneous conversation facilitated with instructional technology so students can ask questions and get answers during a lecture.
- Just-In-Time Teaching: Relevant homework is completed before class and then used/referenced during the lecture.



**QUICK TIP**

### Teaching Online?

All the better! UNO has amazing design consultants in the Office of Digital Learning who can translate these recommendations into the online course environment.

#### References:

- Freeman, S. et al. (2014). Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.
- Kramer, M. W. (2017). Sage on the Stage or Bore at the Board? Communication Education.



**Ashley Harlow**

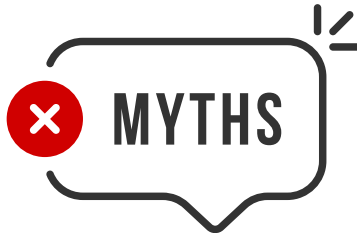
College of Business Administration

# Debunking the Myth of Learning Styles

**“I’m a visual learner.”**

**“I’m an auditory learner.”**

You’ve likely heard these statements from students who invoke a learning style as a reason they are not performing well. They proclaim that the instructor doesn’t teach in a way that’s best for them or doesn’t match their learning style. Despite what students believe, numerous studies have shown that learning styles are myths.



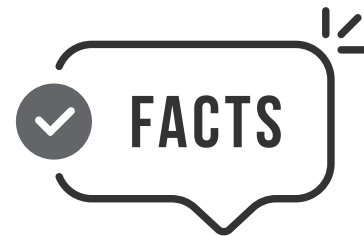
## Purported Learning Styles

- Visual: prefer drawings, diagrams, graphs, pictures
- Auditory: prefer hearing information
- Reading/Writing: prefer text-based information
- Kinesthetic: prefer hands-on, real-world activities/information

**Learning is a process that often involves multiple senses and different types of activities. Help students see different perspectives, make connections, and engage with the content.**

## Using Multiple Modalities Will Help Students Learn

- Watch a video.
- Read the textbook.
- Do the problems.
- Discuss with peers.



Becoming good at something, a sport, playing an instrument, or understanding complex ideas, takes time and practice. You can watch a hundred basketball games, but that doesn’t mean you can make a layup. You can listen to a symphony, but that doesn’t mean you can write one or play any of the instruments. You can play a game, but that doesn't mean you can explain the rules. Even if students don’t think the skills they are practicing are directly applicable to their lives, they serve as cross-training. For example, reading more can make you a better writer. Math skills can support learning chemistry or physics.

It is easier to be a passive receiver of information via a lecture or video than an active participant in constructing knowledge. Research has shown that students believe they learn more when listening to an engaging lecture and less when asked to discuss questions with their peers. In fact, research shows that learning gains are reversed – students learn more when they are active participants in their learning. By encouraging students to do more across modalities, we help them learn more.

### References:

- Deslauriers, L., McCarty, L. S., Miller, K., Callaghan, K., & Kestin, G. (2019). Measuring Actual Learning vs Feeling of Learning in Response to Being Actively Engaged in the Classroom. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
- Furey, W. (2020, April 7). The Stubborn Myth of “Learning Styles.” Education Next.
- Additional references available upon request.



**Nicole Infante**  
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# Using AI for Personalized Communication

Personalized communication with your students is important, however, it is often not feasible, particularly in large classes. Although AI might seem highly impersonal, it can be a helpful tool to get to know students. Follow this step-by-step example and have AI help you send personalized messages to your students.

**01** >> Have students fill out a one-page “This is Me” Microsoft Word form at the beginning of a semester. Clarify that this information is confidential, and it is OK if they do not want to respond to any or all questions. Some possible questions include: What is your 1) name, 2) prior exposure to the subject matter content, 3) expectations from the course, and 4) favorite past time activity.

**02** >> In Microsoft Word, merge all files to create a master document – You might label it “Bio\_All”. Open Microsoft Word. Select the Insert tab. Click Object in the Text group. Select text from file. Choose the first file you want to merge, then click Insert. Repeat for each additional file you want to merge. Review the merged file and save your work.

**03** >> Scan the QR code to the right to access a pre-written prompt example. Then enter the prompt into ChatGPT or another chatbot and upload the “Bio\_All” document.



[bit.ly/ai-script](https://bit.ly/ai-script)

ChatGPT will create a table in response to the prompt. Save this table as “Bio\_Table”. This document acts as a handy summary table for you to review students at a glance. Go through the table to get a general idea about the class.

**04** >> Scan the QR code to the right to access another pre-written prompt example. Enter the prompt and upload the “Bio\_Table” document.

**05** >> You can review the text of a few generated emails to verify the content and check for accuracy. Then copy/paste the welcome emails for each student.

## Other Creative Ideas to Use AI in Teaching

- Ask students to incorporate AI image generation in a writing or research assignment to add a visual component to their written work. For example, students might use an image generator by asking an AI tool to create visual representations of characters who are described in a piece of literature.
- Use AI to launch a discussion on ethical considerations related to rapidly changing technology. You can address topics of privacy as well as concerns related to algorithmic fairness and the potential for bias.
- Have students use AI to solve a community-based problem. Students can experiment with writing prompts that draw from data sets, unique information about the community, and perspectives of community stakeholders that have been uploaded into the AI tool. Students can then evaluate the solution formulated by AI.

### References:

- Alam, A. (2023). Harnessing the Power of AI to Create Intelligent Tutoring Systems for Enhanced Classroom Experience and Improved Learning Outcomes. Intelligent Communication Technologies and Virtual Mobile Networks.
- Speicher, S. (n.d.) Unlocking Human-AI Potential: 10 Best Practices for AI Assignments in Higher Education. ACUE Teaching Excellence.



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# Embedding Research into Teaching

**Library colleagues can help you strategically create research assignments that blend instructional design principles with assessment tools and disciplinary resources.**

## **Understanding by Design:**

- Design research assignments using the Understanding by Design framework. The framework starts with the end in mind as in what students should know, understand, and be able to do by the end of the learning experience. Working with subject librarians can help you identify and align learning objectives, and they can suggest either library-subscribed or open education resources that help achieve these learning outcomes.

## **Designing Assessment:**

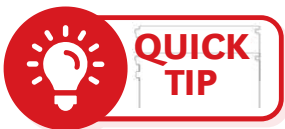
- To measure student performance, it is essential to create effective assessments. Rubrics, a common assessment tool, involve careful consideration of the learning objectives, the research process, and disciplinary standards and guidelines. Subject librarians can provide examples of assessment tools used in similar research assignments. These assessments can reflect different levels of student performance with the descriptors that indicate what constitutes performance at that level.

## **Information Literacy Skills:**

- With measurable student learning outcomes in mind, subject librarians can help identify and align key information literacy competencies outlined in the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. This process can guide students through progressively complex and iterative research tasks including search strategies, source evaluation, and disciplinary citation practices.

## **Research Guides:**

- Research guides save students time by highlighting key databases and online resources tailored to their specific subject area or assignment. Direct students to these resources to enhance their understanding of course materials, foster independent research skills, and encourage deeper engagement with the course content. UNO Libraries offer a complete list of both subject and course-specific research guides as a resource.



**Collaborate with subject specialist librarians to gain valuable insights when it comes to designing or revising curricula.**

### References:

- Association of College and Research Libraries (2016). Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.
- LibGuides. (n.d.). UNO Libraries.
- Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). Understanding by Design.



**Omer Farooq**

Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Library

# Integrating Service Learning

Service learning is a community-engaged approach used in teaching. It brings together students and community partners for mutually beneficial educational outcomes. Service learning often involves a project where students work on real-life problems brought by community partners in application areas relevant to the course objectives. Service learning has been shown to enhance student performance, motivation, leadership, program satisfaction, and preparation for work. However, many faculty members new to service learning find the process of integrating this approach for the first time to be intimidating. Use these guiding questions to step through planning your next service learning course.

? What are the main goals of the course?

Review student learning outcomes and determine if your course includes an applied element. Not all courses are appropriate for community-collaborative approaches either due to the content area (e.g., not something represented in the community) or not easily applied to a real-world project (e.g., requires specialized equipment, uses sensitive data).

? Can the course be project-based?

Most courses that include collaboration with a community partner typically center around a project that the partner has expressed as a need for themselves or for their community or organization. These projects can span several semesters, a whole semester, or part of a semester depending on the scale of work. For first-time service learning educators, starting short and sweet is best.

? What level are the students?

Intro courses cover fundamental concepts. Students may be unprepared to deliver a polished product by the end of the course. Students may still be developing communication and collaboration skills. If considering community engagement for an intro course, scaffold or ladder course concepts in discrete chunks that still provide value to a community partner (e.g., medium-fidelity prototypes, minor modifications to existing resources, data analysis based on community partner needs).

? What type of deliverable are you planning?

Some courses primarily involve analysis or experiments and will produce results that can be documented in a report. Other courses will involve the creation of an artifact of some kind (e.g., website, application, artwork, performance) that will be shared with the community partner. For courses that produce tangible artifacts, make sure to discuss the plan for post-course ownership and maintenance of the artifact with your community partner.

? Are there other dependencies?

Some courses are part of a sequence of (e.g., Capstone 1, Capstone 2) or have requirements dictated by accreditation bodies. These dependencies may influence the type of engagement that may be possible in the course you are planning. If unsure, talk with your program committee or unit chair/director to ensure your planning fits well into the curriculum for the program.

Once you have identified answers to the above, it's time to 1) contact the UNO **Service Learning Academy** to discuss your ideas and tap into their expertise to structure interactions with potential partners and 2) reach out to contacts within your professional network who might be a good fit, prioritizing those with capacity to participate and work in areas that are relevant to the course. Float the idea of your course by them, listen to their input, and work with the Service Learning Academy to plan, implement, and evaluate your service learning project.

## References:

- Matusovich, H. M., Oakes, W., & Zoltowski, C. B. (2013). Why Women Choose Service-learning: Seeking and Finding Engineering-related Experiences. *International Journal of Engineering Education*.
- Timmerman, K., & Goldweber, M. (2022, February). Department-wide Multi-semester Community Engaged Learning Initiative to Overcome Common Barriers to Service-Learning Implementation. *Proceedings of the 53rd ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education*.



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# Working with Neurodiverse Students

## What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity describes the concept that 1) the human brain is extremely complex and 2) the brains of some individuals are “wired” in ways that differ from the neurotypical brain. It encompasses a wide range of cognitive, learning, and behavioral variances. Examples include those with documented diagnoses such as ADHD, learning disabilities, and autism. On campuses across the country and at UNO, the number of diagnosed neurodivergent students is increasing though many more neurodiverse students may not be formally diagnosed.



**Refer students who need support or help accessing resources to the Accessibility Service Center (ASC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and UNO Health Services.**

## Neurodiversity is not a deficit.

Although there is no correct way of learning, academic and social settings can present neurodivergent students with a number of challenges related to goal-setting, organization, self-regulation, focus, flexible thinking, reading social cues, communication, and inhibitory control. In addition to the functional challenges, students who are neurodivergent can feel stigmatized, marginalized, and isolated.

## Helpful strategies for instructors:

Incorporate Universal Design for Learning, a framework based on scientific insights into how learning processes can differ. It includes three pillars that inform strategies to support all learners (to learn more, visit [cast.org](https://www.cast.org)).

### Multiple means of engagement

1.
  - Learners differ in their preference and tolerance for engagement and social interaction in classroom environments. Some students work best with predictability while others enjoy spontaneity.
  - Strategies: clarify and remind students of expectations; preview upcoming tasks; provide discussion prompts before class; minimize classroom distractions; and structure group work

### Multiple means of representation

2.
  - Learners express themselves and demonstrate knowledge in different ways. Some students have limited access to working memory and as a result, can seem disorganized or unprepared.
  - Strategies: model processes/skills; offer templates/exemplars; allow for practice, drafts, and revisions as appropriate; scaffold large projects; encourage goal setting; share/discuss grading rubrics with students; and consider options for assessment

### Multiple means of expression

3.
  - Learners differ in how they process and comprehend sensory input. Some students may have visual or hearing impairments, others may need more cognitive processing time or struggle to connect content due to language or cultural differences.
  - Strategies: pair verbal directions with images; use graphic organizers/cues; share copies of slides/notes; clarify vocabulary, symbols, metaphors, and idioms; categorize information; and embed closed captioning for recorded lectures

#### References:

- CAST. “CAST: Until Learning Has No Limits®.” [www.cast.org](https://www.cast.org), 2022, [www.cast.org/](https://www.cast.org/).



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# Maximizing Feedback and Grading

In surveys reporting student satisfaction, students tell us they want feedback. Effective feedback gives learners an understanding of how a task should be accomplished and offers support to enhance their efforts to achieve it. Focusing on the purpose, delivery, and timing of your feedback to students is an important step in supporting student learning.

## Purpose

Do the receivers of the feedback understand the purpose?



## Delivery

Does the delivery clarify the content and support reflection?



## Timing

What is the timing of the delivery?

### Purpose

Students should clearly understand how each assignment aligns with course objectives and content. To do this, post a short video on Canvas to introduce and provide an overview of the purpose and rationale. When students understand the goals of the course and how each assignment contributes to those goals, they are more likely to be motivated to incorporate your feedback into future work.

### Delivery

Explore how to provide explicit feedback. Students should have easy and varied access to your feedback. Providing multiple sources of feedback, such as written and verbal feedback through Canvas, can increase the visibility of feedback and encourage them to consistently revisit information to make decisions related to future assignments.

### Timing

Faculty members often feel pressure to provide feedback that is both timely and meaningful. Consider using peer feedback to get students more immediate feedback and improve the quality of their final products that you will grade.

The **TAG** strategy allows students to give and receive quality feedback from peers. The **Tell (T)** component requires students to share positive feedback and affirm the completed work. The **Ask (A)** component encourages students to question and delve deeper into the material. The **Give (G)** component encourages students to provide constructive feedback and suggestions for improving their work. This approach reduces the time pressure a faculty member may feel and helps identify patterns in students' work that can be addressed before they submit their final product to you.

- How can you communicate the purpose for assignments?
- What can you do to make feedback relevant and purposeful?
- What feedback structures encourage self-reflection?
- How do you vary the modes of feedback and determine which are effective?
- Can you provide more immediate feedback to students?
- How might you use peer feedback strategies?

#### References:

- Carroll, D. (2014). Graduate Course Experience 2013: A Report on the Course Experience Perceptions of Recent Graduates. Melbourne: Graduate Careers Australia.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. Review of Educational Research.
- Winstone, N. E., Ballou, K., & Carless, D. (2022). Discipline-specific Feedback Literacies: A Framework for Curriculum Design. Higher Education.



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# Interpreting Course Evaluations and Feedback

**Student feedback from course evaluations can help you analyze the quality of your teaching. Here are five steps on how to analyze and interpret your course evaluation data.**

1

Start by looking at the average scores on the various teaching factors measured on the evaluation. Course evaluations often group items according to factors such as enthusiasm, rapport, and learning. In general, mean scores toward the top of the rating scale for each factor indicate areas of strength in your teaching. Mean scores that range in the low to middle range of the scale suggest the factor may need some improvement and warrant a closer look at individual items for more detailed information.

2

Review scores of the individual items. First, look at the percentage of students responding to each response choice. Then, look at the mean score of the item. The percent responses can be valuable because these can help you interpret the mean item scores. If one or two students were overly negative and rated the item very low, while the majority of the students rated the item favorably, the mean score may not be reflective of the majority's perception of the class. Alternatively, if most students rate the item similarly, then the mean score is likely an accurate representation of their perceptions.

3

Look at course workload/difficulty items. These items can be tricky to interpret because every course is different in its expectations of time and difficulty. However, if there are consistent responses that the course pace is too fast or comparatively high in workload, adjustment in these areas might be something to consider.

4

Examine department and college averages if available. You can use these averages to get a sense of how your evaluations compare to typical course evaluations in your department, college, or university. Ask your chair or director to help you access these unit-level averages.

5

Finally, review the narrative comments provided by students. Look for patterns and pull out topics that students consistently address. If one student makes a comment about something, but no one else brings it up, it might not be something to worry about. But if multiple students say similar things, then that could be something to pay attention to. Try not to dwell on one or two overly negative comments that no other students mention.

Remember course evaluations are just one piece of data about your teaching. Student perceptions are important to know, but so is information about your instructional methods, content delivery, student engagement, and assessment procedures. All these factors contribute to good teaching. If you determine that you need to address something based on the student feedback, target one or two areas rather than try to change everything at once. Finally, remember to take a moment to celebrate your successes. It's easy to get down about a negative comment or low rating. But overall, it's likely that you have a lot of great comments and feedback that you should celebrate.

#### References:

- Boysen, G. A. (2017). Statistical Knowledge and the Over-interpretation of Student Evaluations of Teaching. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*.
- Levinsson, H., Nilsson, A., Mårtensson, K. et al. (2024). Course Design as a Stronger Predictor of Student Evaluation of Quality and Student Engagement than Teacher Ratings. *Higher Education*.



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# RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

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DISCOVER WAYS TO  
ENHANCE AND ADVANCE  
RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP,  
AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

# Supporting Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Student benefits of faculty-led undergraduate research experiences (FLURE) are well documented and include enhanced critical thinking and analytical skills, improved writing and oral communication, greater academic success, and advanced professional development and career trajectories. Less commonly discussed is the impact of FLURE on faculty outcomes. The recommendations and practical considerations listed below are based on 35 years of mentoring undergraduates and can help you understand the potential impact of FLURE.

## Step-by-step process

- 1 Determine if you have the time, energy, and desire to mentor undergraduates in research or support their creative work.
- 2 Given your time availability and department's expectations, identify which research model is appropriate.
- 3 Assess the student's ability, experience, interest, and time commitment for research or creative activity.
- 4 Working with the student, develop a written agreement with clear expectations.
- 5 Plan an orientation for all of your proteges. Ask former students for suggestions on what might be helpful.
- 6 Give socio-emotional support and positive encouragement. You cannot over-praise a student.
- 7 Provide closure. Acknowledge and celebrate milestones and successes.

## Questions to ask yourself...



- Are you on the tenure track? Applying for grants? What is your teaching load?
- Do you intrinsically enjoy working with undergraduates and understand that mentoring may take time away from your own professional goals?
- Will you allow students to volunteer as a researcher, pursue a FUSE grant, take independent study or senior thesis for course credit?
- Will the student be primarily mentored by your graduate students, or will you provide all or the bulk of the mentoring?
- Can experienced students help with simpler tasks such as collecting or coding data?
- Do students have the necessary coursework and academic acumen to engage in more advanced research or creative activity?
- To what extent does the research/creative project allow for students?
- What is the communication frequency (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly) and type (Zoom, in-person, text, phone calls, email) between you and the student?
- How and where will information be stored (e.g. One Drive shared folder, SharePoint)?
- How will you encourage and support student participation in the UNO Research and Creative Activity Fair and other professional conferences?

## Other suggestions

Take time to express appreciation or praise for little steps in the research/creative process instead of waiting for the project's completion. Require students to write a short reflection paper after the project to show how they have grown from the experience. Post your students' activities and achievements on your department's website and social media outlets. Advocate for your proteges' recognition and awards. Advise students to provide an unofficial transcript, a CV, and their personal statement if they apply for graduate school as this will strengthen your letter and advocacy for them.

### References:

- Adebese, A. (2022). Undergraduate Students' Involvement in Research: Values, Benefits, Barriers, and Recommendations. *Annals of Medicine and Surgery*.
- Johnson, W. B., Behling, L. L., Miller, P., & Vandermaas-Peeler, M. (2015). Undergraduate Research Mentoring: Obstacles and Opportunities. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*.



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# Supporting Graduate Research and Creative Activity

Research shows that students perceive their relationship with their faculty advisors as one of the greatest determinants of success in graduate school. Supporting graduate student research/creative activity takes time, investment, and resources - often in unequal proportions depending on the student. These tips can help you support graduate students.

## Establish clear expectations.

Understand the student's goals before agreeing to work with a student. Have an informal meeting, get to know them, and determine how your work aligns with each other's interests. Studies have found that mentor and mentee perceptions of their progress, skills, and knowledge are often misaligned. It's disappointing when you invest in a student and they stop pursuing research/creative work. Try to mitigate this before it becomes an issue by setting clear expectations.

## Know your deadlines.

Whether it's a grant, abstract/manuscript, exhibition, or simply thesis/dissertation submission, work backward from deadlines. For example, the thesis/dissertation deadline at UNO is 12 working days before commencement. From this date, identify when students need to edit/format/submit their document; defend/present their thesis/dissertation; have their committee review their "final" document; analyze data; collect data; train for data collection; secure IRB approval (if necessary); propose their thesis/dissertation; have committee members review their proposal document; and write their thesis/dissertation proposal. As you can see, there are a lot of steps, and working backward will allow you to strategically plan with the student. Make sure to add extra time to buffer for unexpected issues - everything takes longer than you think!

## Model the behaviors you expect.

For instance, if you expect students to write/create something in a timely manner, then you must also provide timely feedback. If you communicate a sense of urgency by providing prompt feedback, students may be more receptive to the writing or other expectations and demonstrate a similar sense of urgency. Postponements and procrastination can cause unnecessary delays in the timeline!

## Remember, we are all human.

Graduate students are adults, and adult learners have adult problems. Some may provide for families or be at a stage in their lives where major events (good and bad) are likely occurring (e.g., weddings, birth of a child, caring for aging parents). Providing social-emotional support enhances mentor-mentee relationships. Be kind, respectful, and flexible when possible, and be supportive!



If students are not meeting expectations, figure out their challenges and guide them to resources. Writing support? Have them visit the UNO Writing Center or sign up for a graduate student writing boot camp or 10-day Writing Challenge. Do they need support for a literature search? Check with your UNO subject librarian. There are many support services on campus to assist them! If you are struggling with mentorship yourself, consider the TANDEM program!

### References:

- Bain, S. (2011). The Successful Graduate Student: A Review of the Factors for Success.
- Feldon, D. F., Maher, M. A., Hurst, M., & Timmerman, B. (2015). Faculty Mentors', Graduate Students', and Performance-Based Assessments of Students' Research Skill Development. *American Educational Research Journal*.
- Waldeck, J. H., Orrego, V. O., Plax, T. G., & Kearney, P. (1997). Graduate Student/Faculty Mentoring Relationships: Who Gets Mentored, How it Happens, and to What End. *Communication Quarterly*.



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# Applying for Internal Funding

**UNO offers funding opportunities to foster your success, help you advance your discipline, and maximize your contributions to the public good.**

## Remember these things when applying for internal funding:



1. Carefully read submission guidelines; adhere to deadlines; and follow the rules. If confused, ask for help.
2. Seek feedback on your idea and application from your colleagues.
3. Align your idea/project with institutional goals and priorities.
4. In your proposal, identify the “next step” by naming possible external funding opportunities should you receive the internal funding.

## Internal Funding Opportunities

- UNO’s Office of Research and Creative Activity (ORCA) funds and coordinates UCRCA grants. This internal funding program reflects the name of the application review committee - the University Committee for Research and Creative Activity. Intended as “seed grants” that may be leveraged for future accomplishments (e.g., external grants, impactful publications, renowned performances or exhibits), these grants can help you launch your research and creative activity. Individuals in their first few years of appointment are particularly encouraged to apply. The committee accepts full proposals (fall and spring deadlines) and mini-grants (rolling deadlines). Full-time faculty members are eligible.
- The Collaboration Initiative (CI) is a system-wide program that supports research collaborations among faculty with strong potential to compete for federal extramural funding. To be eligible, research teams must include collaborators from two or more NU campuses who confirm that their research topic 1) fits the objectives of a federal funding agency’s grant program portfolio, and/or 2) matches a priority topic identified by the National Strategic Research Institute. Awards include planning grants and implementation grants. To be eligible, applicants must attend the annual CI retreat on the UNL campus.
- Internal funding through Digital Learning is also available to support you as you review, update, and create quality online courses. Recipients of these teaching grants work closely with UNO instructional designers to adopt best practices in digital pedagogy and design. Priority is given to applications that support a fully online program or degree path; increase course capacity and flexibility; and/or align with program, department, and/or college goals. Faculty members may simultaneously earn additional funding as an incentive for completing an online training course.



**Look for announcements of other internal funding by reading MavDaily and subscribing to the ORCA newsletter. Email questions to [unoorca@unomaha.edu](mailto:unoorca@unomaha.edu)**

### References:

- EAB (2018, June 5). Five Steps for Effective Seed Funding.
- Mohammed, R., (2016). Top Tips for Internal Grants. The Research Whisperer.



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# Leveraging Internal Funding to Compete for External Funding



Have an exciting set of ideas or projects that will impact your field or broader community? Interested in learning how to put together a competitive application for external funding? Great! Being able to assemble a competitive external funding application is a continual learning process and what makes a competitive application can vary by funding source.

## General Strategies to Consider



### **Read all funding announcements carefully.**

Much effort is placed into crafting these funding opportunity announcements. You will be able to pick up key information.



### **Formulate a concise, one-page synopsis of your ideas/projects.**

Set up an appointment to chat with the person in charge of correspondence for a specific funding announcement (typically a program officer or director) about the suitability of your ideas.



### **Address the “feasibility” of accomplishing or carrying out your ideas or projects. This is an important factor in the competitiveness of an external funding proposal.**

One way to demonstrate a project’s feasibility is to provide at least some evidence (e.g., providing preliminary data or products for an experiment, concept, or portfolio) that you can accomplish your project’s goals. Easier said than done. How can you demonstrate a project’s feasibility when people’s time and materials can be costly? [Utilize internal funding opportunities at UNO!](#)

- UNO’s Office of Research and Creative Activities (ORCA) is an excellent start. ORCA has funding opportunities for faculty and inspired students. All of which can serve the purpose of providing internal funds for materials and/or personnel time.
- Your college and/or department may also have funds that can be obtained through an application process. Inquire with your chair, director, or your dean’s office about possibilities.
- The University of Nebraska (NU) system, provides Nebraska Research Initiative (NRI) funds, which support collaborative endeavors across the NU campuses. This can be a useful opportunity if your ideas align with NRI’s current topics.



### **Strategically utilize internal funds to purchase materials and/or pay personnel to complete the early steps of a project or to run a small pilot project.**

This goes a long way toward your next research step - building a competitive external funding application!

#### References:

- Davis, J. M., Soltis, P. S., Adams, D. C., Larkin, S. L., & Gilbert, R. A. (2020). Seed Funds Leverage External Awards for Research in Natural Resources and Agricultural Systems. *Forests*.
- Mohammed, R. (2016). Top Tips for Internal Grants. *The Research Whisperer*.



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# Finding External Funding Sources

## “How can I help you solve your problem?”

This is the mantra colleagues and I have used to find, apply for, and secure about \$15 million in external funding over the past 10 years. Whether you're dealing with a federal funding agency, direct federal and/or state appropriations, philanthropic foundations, corporate funding programs, individual donors, or internal funding competitions, the people you are asking to hand you their money have problems in mind they'd like someone to solve. It's your job to tell them why you and your work can help.

- Focusing on using your skill set to solve new problems, including ones you haven't considered before, opens the door to significantly more external funding opportunities.
- External funding really is a numbers game, so the more proposals you submit the better your chances of getting funding.
- Have flexibility in your research agenda and a willingness to go beyond your doctoral dissertation.

## Now that you're open to considering a wide array of opportunities, where do you find them?

### Federal funding:

- Your first stop is grants.gov. There are 26 federal grant-making agencies, and you can search all the available opportunities from that site. Just keep your search terms specific enough that you find programs where you can add value, but broad enough that you aren't limiting yourself. For example, I'm a physicist and have submitted proposals to the National Endowment for the Humanities.



### State funding:

- Nebraska has no portal for all state funding opportunities. However, you can find opportunities through the websites of various state agencies. Just google “Nebraska state agencies” and you will get a list. For example, if you go to the website of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, you'll find a list of programs they support.

### Smaller organizations:

- Philanthropic foundations in the area can be similarly found by a simple Google search. Unlike federal programs, to be successful you will typically need to first build a relationship with the organization. The good news is that's why they exist! Find a program officer, invite them for coffee, and learn what problems you might be able to help them solve.

The main takeaway here is that if you want external funding, you're going to have to ask for it - a lot. Funding programs are relatively easy to find, but you must have your mind open to new possibilities. If you focus on “how can I help solve their problems” instead of “how can I get funding for my thing,” then you will find more opportunities and ultimately be more successful.

#### References:

- Bauer, D. G. (2021). The "How To" Grants Manual: Successful Grantseeking Techniques for Obtaining Public and Private Grants.
- Thomas, K. T. (2016). Securing External Funding: Five Strategies for Administrators and Faculty. Kinesiology Review.



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# Applying for Grants

**Funding your research or creative activity can seem complicated and overwhelming. These simple steps can improve your chances of success.**

## 1 Develop Strategic Vision

- Idea development makes it easier to craft a convincing proposal.
- Read and consider following the strong inference scientific method.
- Keep a research/ideas notebook to record any ideas that surface. Keep this notebook with you everywhere you go.

## 2 Identify Funding Opportunities

- Read about the mission of agencies and funding programs to determine if it matches your work.
- Connect with program officers, if appropriate.
- Get examples of successful proposals.

## 3 Notify Relevant Campus Offices

- The Office of Sponsored Programs can help with project scope, draft a budget, and guide your submission and award process.
- Department chairs/directors need to approve workload and other needed resources. They often also have helpful advice.

## 4 List All Application Requirements

- Get started early on items needed from others (biosketches, letters of support, etc.).
- Ask questions and get clarifications early in the process.
- Build your appropriate team.

## 5 Prepare Your Application

- Write and organize your grant proposal based on the evaluation criteria. Headings should come right from the request for funding announcement.
- Consider your proposal a persuasive document convincing reviewers to give you money.
- Make sure your writing is clear and jargon-free.
- Much progress can be made with daily writing time, even 30 minutes. It is less overwhelming to carve out 30 minutes/day than trying to find four-hour blocks of time every week.

## 6 Get Feedback

- Have collaborators read proposals through all stages.
- Weekly writing groups that include individuals from various disciplines are very helpful to writing accountability and to constantly improve your proposal.

## 7 Polish and Submit

- Make a style guide so that headings, subheadings, font, and figures are all consistent.
- Be consistent with the use of terminology and abbreviations. Limit abbreviations.
- Have individuals outside of the discipline or even non-academics read for grammar and understanding.

## 8 Be Persistent

- Grants are rarely funded on the first submission. Review feedback, put the grant away for a time, then come back and improve it for the next round.
- Have someone with an outside perspective go over grant feedback with you. Try to address as many comments as possible. If you thought information was misinterpreted, that likely means it was unclear.

### References:

- AtKisson M. S. (2023). Handbook for Planning and Writing Successful Grant Proposals.
- Platt, J. R. (1964). Strong Inference. Certain Systematic Methods of Scientific Thinking May Produce Much More Rapid Progress than Others. Science.
- Stergiou, N. (2020). Advice for the Novice Investigator.



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# Conducting Community-engaged Research

Community-engaged research defines a process in which researchers work in partnership with a community, (e.g., groups of people, united by geography or a shared cause/interest) to improve their well-being. Depending on the degree of community involvement, community-engaged research exists on a continuum, ranging from outreach to shared leadership. Methods used in community-engaged research include observation and interviews, focus groups, surveys, and experiments.

## Tips for Community-engaged Research

Clarify the goal/purpose of undertaking the research project. For example, is the goal to improve the overall health of a community, or will the project be focused on a specific issue, for example, mental health?

Ensure that ethical standards are followed and community members understand the risks and benefits of participation.

Identify groups that will be involved. For example, are you targeting a specific racial/ethnic group, a particular age group, or members of a certain profession?

Identify opportunities for co-learning - the exchange of skills/knowledge between researchers and community members. All entities participating should meaningfully contribute and gain from the project.

Be explicit about the level of community involvement. For example, will the community provide input/feedback on the research project or will they be research partners?

Identify, mobilize, build on, and develop existing community assets/resources. Individuals in the community organizations have valuable knowledge and skills.

Develop a comprehensive understanding of the community. This includes its culture, norms, values, history, political structure, sociodemographic makeup, and economic infrastructure.

Be prepared to adapt to the community's changing needs and unforeseen challenges and opportunities.

Be aware of how the community perceives those initiating community-engaged research projects; for example, do they perceive them as individuals with credibility?

Realize that for empowerment to occur, community members must take ownership of issues and potential solutions. Be prepared to relinquish control of solutions or interventions to community members.

Meet with community members in their surroundings to build rapport and trust and to identify barriers and facilitators to engagement.

Recognize that successful community-engaged projects require long-term commitment and stewardship.

### References:

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. (2015, June 25). Principles of Community Engagement.
- Wallerstein, N. et al. (2020). Engage for Equity: A Long-term Study of Community-based Participatory Research and Community-engaged Research Practices and Outcomes. Health Education & Behavior.



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# Being Creative: The Nature of Creativity In and Around Research

**Every relationship we enter into has the potential to be an opportunity for creativity.**

The above applies to interactions with our students in the classroom, lab, and studio. Moreover, the relationships and challenges we encounter in our research can also benefit from recognizing the role of creativity in discovering and innovating.

All learning relies on acute observations, attentiveness, and the use of the senses to different degrees. However, we can be guilty of overlooking the creativity and even the beauty of the sciences. Think of the artistry required in a math equation, science experiment, or clinical interaction. We may underestimate the rigor and empiricism, which are necessary when the artist, writer, or performer seeks to respond, render, and make sense of the world around us. The patterns and refrains that may be required in a drawing or a piece of music, drama, or dance can find their parallels in the structures of math, science, and medicine. In research, we are challenged to maintain a sense of curiosity and be open to new perspectives and knowledge. To do so, is an inherently creative endeavor.

## Tips to be Creative in Your Research

- Strive to be open to fresh perspectives and new information.
- Be open to the challenges and rewards of letting your mind wander. Doing so can not only help you relax, but it can also facilitate new realizations and innovations.
- Seek and consider new ideas. We can be limited by our expectations and judgments. It is important not to let our assumptions diminish our capacity for creativity and maintaining our curiosity.
- View your problem from a different perspective to open new possibilities. Inviting someone else to observe and reflect on the problem or question an artwork can facilitate new possibilities, insights, and solutions.
- Take risks. Don't be afraid of getting things wrong. This requires embracing our tolerance for uncertainty and the vulnerabilities it may engender. Embracing uncertainty can be challenging, but it offers greater opportunity for growth and discovery.

The creative process involves developing space for open communication, curiosity, and wonder. Recognizing the value of creativity in our research can facilitate innovative research, fresh solutions, and richer collaborations. Creativity can help us find enjoyment and renewed purpose in our work as well as provide us with new skills to advance our knowledge while also maintaining personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

#### References:

- Kumagai, A. K., & Wear, D. (2014). Making Strange: A Role for the Humanities in Medical Education. *Academic Medicine*.
- McNiff, S. (2012). Opportunities and Challenges in Art-based Research. *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*.
- Van Aken, K. (2016). The Critical Role of Creativity in Research. *MRS Bulletin*.



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# Collaborating Across Disciplines

If you want to open new possibilities in your teaching and/or research and creative work, you might consider interdisciplinary collaborations. Interest in this approach to teaching, research, and creative activity is growing and often connected to increased creativity and innovation.

**What can interdisciplinary collaboration look like for you? Here are steps to get started.**

## >>> Identify an idea.

Do you have an area or interest that could benefit from some expansion? Look for a person with that knowledge base. Do you want to try out a new material for your art project or research methodology? Who on campus or in industry has worked with a similar material? Do you want to incorporate a skill set that you don't have? Research someone with a record of completing projects and reach out to them. Ask others on campus to recommend individuals who can help you or have adjacent interests to your idea.

## >>> Make contact.

Once you identify a potential collaborator, your query email or initial conversation should explain your project and name the potential collaborator's expertise or skill set you are seeking.

## >>> Break the ice.

Begin an interdisciplinary collaboration with a project in mind. The details don't have to be specified, but it helps to have a common question. For example, what are some assumed "impossibilities" in your field? Could you and your collaborator find a way to make one or more of these possible?

## >>> Set deadlines.

However arbitrary at first, deadlines keep both parties engaged - even flexible deadlines are helpful.

## >>> Keep an open mind.

Some collaborations, like between book artists and writers, navigate similar waters, but collaborating with someone from a completely different area of study may require thorough explanations and include creating a common vocabulary. Diverse experiences and perspectives are attributes of successful collaborations.

## >>> Create a shared space.

Build a collection of essays, book passages, articles, and images in a shared document or folder. This common space can serve as a repository of references, resources, artifacts, and inspiration for the creative process or your scholarship and research.

## >>> Meet regularly.

Face-to-face discussions can provide some much-needed humanity when the discussion becomes a bit abstract. Visit each other's studios or labs if possible. This may build bridges between perspectives. In-person meetings are great, but Zoom is a good alternative when that isn't possible.

## >>> Acknowledge your collaborator.

Remember that they have their own experience and expertise - take advantage of the potential for new perspectives! Express gratitude. Celebrate successes.



UNO offers programs that foster interdisciplinary collaboration and may provide opportunities for creating faculty connections. The Interdisciplinary Studies Program offers students the opportunity to build their own majors and minors combining multiple areas of expertise on campus. The Service Learning Academy facilitates collaboration between faculty members and organizations within the Omaha community. You might also join an interdisciplinary Community of Practice offered through the Center for Faculty Excellence.

### References:

- Johnston, E., Burleigh, C., & Wilson, A. (2020). Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research for Professional Academic Development in Higher Education. Higher Learning Research Communications.
- Moirano, R., Sánchez, M. A., & Štěpánek, L. (2020). Creative Interdisciplinary Collaboration: A Systematic Literature Review. Thinking Skills and Creativity.



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# Using Research Tools



We all have different methods of beginning, tracking, sustaining, completing, and disseminating our scholarly work. For some, research is relational and analog, located in peer-to-peer communication and known and trusted source material from home libraries. For others, it's automated and digital, collected via alerts, monthly downloads, and email. Others are serendipitous, collecting and revisiting threads both analog and digital, collected and woven together over time.

Research and writing workflows shift as new technologies and tools are introduced. These tools ease the friction of academic work, allowing us to collect, organize, and share source material without time-consuming workarounds or steep learning curves.

Reference management tools like [RefWorks](#) or [Zotero](#) can assist you in collecting, organizing, sharing, and citing research materials.

## ➤ RefWorks

RefWorks is an online tool owned by Clarivate, a large publicly-traded analytics company. Libraries or individuals pay for access; your access to RefWorks is paid for by Criss Library. Create your account using your UNO email.

Learn to use RefWorks with Criss Library's RefWorks guide by entering "RefWorks" in the search bar of the library website.

## ➤ Zotero

Zotero is free, syncs across devices and to the cloud, and travels with you throughout your academic career. Zotero is part of the Corporation for Digital Scholarship, an independent non-profit organization.

With Zotero, you can:

- Download documents into Zotero folders while you search online or in library databases
- Upload PDFs into Zotero to scan for and apply citation information
- Highlight and annotate PDFs
- Tag your PDFs or citations
- Share collected citations and files with others
- Print reports
- Cite while you write
- Create bibliographies automatically
- Change citation styles with one click

Learn to use Zotero with Criss Library's Zotero tutorials or the Zotero Quick Start Guide. Search for "Zotero" on the library website. For a deeper dive, attend a Zotero workshop during the academic year.

### References:

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**Tammi Owens**

Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Library

# Scheduling Time to Write

Most people keep schedules for important things in life - workout routines, jobs, hobbies, kids' sporting events, etc. Yet, when it comes to writing, even those of us whose careers depend on writing often do not schedule writing time similarly. Instead, we think we'll write in found time - when blocks of three or four hours magically appear. Such blocks of time are myths. Other tasks (department service, laundry, etc.) will fight for our attention. Planning to write during found time leads to more stress and amplifies bad habits, like procrastination.



**To make significant and regular progress on writing projects, schedule writing time just like everything else in your life.**

- Identify days and times when you can write productively.
- Write when you have energy and can focus - not at the end of the day when you are exhausted.
- Use a schedule and follow it.
  - Add work commitments (teaching, office hours, recurring meetings) and add commitments from your personal life (workout times, doctor's appointments, kid's school events, etc.).
  - Find blocks of time when you can write productively (some writers are productive in short one or two-hour blocks, others need three or four hours). Add these to the schedule. If you struggle to identify writing time amidst all your commitments, have conversations about prioritizing writing with your department chair and/or family.



**Avoid scheduling writing time for mornings or late at night if those times don't match your energy level; schedule something else in those times.**



**Once you have added writing time to your schedule, do the following:**

- Add writing time to your digital calendar (use reminders, notifications, etc.); mark this time as "busy" or "unavailable"; protect this time!
- Share your writing schedule (print it, email it, etc.) with family and colleagues; having someone else know your writing schedule helps hold you accountable. They can remind you of upcoming writing sessions and check in with you afterward. This is especially important early on, as you get used to your writing schedule.
- Schedule writing for days/times when you can write in your preferred writing space. Ideally, you should write in the same space for every writing session. But if you use multiple spaces, make sure each is somewhere you can write without being interrupted by students, colleagues, family members, etc. Some faculty write productively in their offices. If that works for you, great. If not, consider the Faculty Study Lounge or reserve a carrel in Criss Library.

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**Travis Adams**

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# Identifying the Right Journal to Share Your Research

**You asked innovative and important questions. You conducted an amazing study. You honed your writing. Now it's time to decide where to submit your (not-yet-completed) manuscript.**

Choosing the right journal to publish your work is an essential step to reaching your intended audience and getting the readership you deserve. Ideally, you don't want to wait until your manuscript is complete before deciding where you would like to have your piece accepted. Also realize, however, that the first place you submit may not be the article's ultimate home. And that's okay – each submission offers the opportunity for valuable feedback from colleagues in your field that you can then use to make your manuscript even better.

## **TIPS** to find an outlet for your research.

- Create a list of potential journals. To do this, look to where others are publishing on similar topics or using similar methodologies. Go to the journal's website to determine whether they publish the kind of article that you are working on (e.g., qualitative, scoping review, theoretical) and whether their "Aims and Scope" align with your manuscript.
- Weigh both the impact factor and audience. For example, in our field of social work, some journals are better suited for practitioners and more likely to reach professionals in the field. Not all of these journals have impact factors. However, other journals (particularly interdisciplinary) have high(er) impact factors – meaning that an article is more likely to be cited by other researchers. This is important because publishing in a high-impact journal denotes that your work is recognized as valuable by top scholars in your field.
- Assess the average publication time. This is particularly advantageous if your study is topical. You can review the journal's submission guidelines or journal metrics for an estimated publication timeline. It's also helpful to check the publication history of a recent article published in this journal. Its timeline from submission to acceptance can offer a more up-to-date estimation.
- Consider the clause "bricks and mortar" – meaning that some of your articles may take you a great deal of time and effort, and you're really hoping to get them published in a high-impact journal. These are your "bricks". Other articles may take less time or are intended for a journal that may not have high impact but that has the reach you're seeking. These are your "mortar". When you go up for promotion, this will help to ensure a diverse portfolio that both contributes to your reputation as a cutting-edge scholar in your field, as well as one who reaches important audiences who can directly apply your work.

**It is so rewarding to see your article in press, and especially when you know that you've selected the right journal to showcase your work.**

Additional resources:

- UNO Library - Research Support: This site contains information on subject area specialists, open-access publishing, and sharing your work with the community via Digital Commons.
- BMJ Author Hub: A great site for early career researchers.

#### References:

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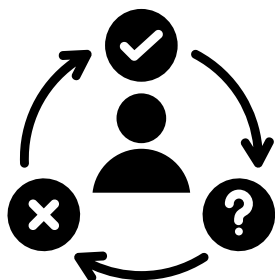
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# Dealing with Rejections or Revise and Resubmits

Frustration is an inevitable emotion when an editor writes anything other than “accepted for publication” regarding your scholarly work submission. You will likely need an immediate outlet for venting. My suggestion is to open a clean document (not an email) on your computer and write everything – in no uncertain terms – that you need to say to ensure that you have fully expressed why you are right and that they are wrong. Read through the document to ensure that you fully expressed yourself, then promptly delete the file! After a day or two, return to the rejection/resubmit letter with fresh eyes. You will undoubtedly see nuggets of wisdom in the comments and begin to recognize where your work can be improved. Now, you can begin to make constructive decisions.



## QUICK TIP

As you progress through the process of revising your work, you will likely realize that your product was substantially improved. Celebrate the improvement as you wait for the acceptance of your work and see it in its final published format.

## If the editor rejected your work:

- Ask yourself whether you desire to fight the rejection or submit elsewhere. Carefully weigh the implications of your decision.
- Keep in mind that appeal timelines are typically very protracted, and rejections are rarely overturned.
- Remember that your work cannot be submitted elsewhere for consideration while an appeal is ongoing.
- In most cases, your best way forward is to make revisions according to the reviews that were provided. Then, resubmit your revised work to a different publisher for consideration.

## If the editor requested that you revise and resubmit your work:

- In your cover letter to the editor, express gratitude for the opportunity to make changes and list the two or three most notable changes you made in response to comments received.
- Carefully consider each reviewer's comment. Make revisions as appropriate. If a reviewer's comment is incorrect and you need to push back, do so respectfully.
- A point-by-point response to each comment is needed.
- Place the reviewer's comment on the page. Then use formatting (color, indents, bold, etc.) to set your response apart from the comment.
- Use third person to refer to the reviewer to avoid being overly casual or accusational.
- Call out specific lines (preferably by line number) in your work where revisions occurred to help the editor and reviewer find changes to your work.
- Create a “compare document” version of your work that shows the changes from the reviewed work relative to the revised submission. Most publishers request this, but it is often helpful to provide this document as a supplement – even if it is not formally requested.

### References:

- Gastel, B., & Day, R. A. (2022). How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper.



**Paul W. Denton**  
College of Arts and Sciences



# Publishing a Book: Advice from Authors

**Adam Tyma, Co-author: Communication Perspectives on Popular Culture; Author: Beer Culture in Theory and Practice: Understanding Craft Beer Culture in the United States**

## How to work a book into your research agenda:

Journal articles get your work out faster. Some of my best projects started as conference paper panels after I had a crazy idea and my colleagues thought it was worth pursuing as well. If you're developing a theoretical framework and need to test it, multiple essays/articles and angles are the way to go. Then write a book to further disseminate your work. A book allows you the space to think through the ideas that have been worked over for the past several years. Also - some ideas are inherently too big to capture in a single essay, so a book may help you work through them.

## How to find a publisher:

Consider the type of book and who the audience might be (e.g., edited volume for students and researchers; monograph for academics; general audience non-fiction work). Each will have its niches and built-in audiences. See what is being published and where. Talk with potential publishers about the cost to the reader. High costs may impact sales.

## What do I wish I had known?

- Edited volumes are not as easy as you would hope. You will spend more time editing/revising than you anticipated.
- Don't go to an acquisition editor with an under-developed idea. Allow the outside voice of someone who has done this many times to give you some suggestions. If they are talking to you, they are interested AND they want to sell copies.
- A good book project will take one to two years, probably more. Just be ready for this.

**Jody Keisner, Author: Under My Bed and Other Essays**

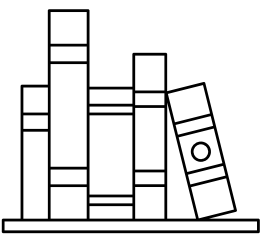
- Many writers, including me, don't like to think about the business side of being an author. Perhaps commercialization seems to muddy our romantic notions of the craft or discipline. However, if a book's success is at least partly defined by its ability to disseminate knowledge and reach readers outside of one's innermost social or academic circle, then an author must be intentional about building an author platform, networking, participating in literary and academic citizenship, and marketing and promoting their book. Few presses have the financial resources to send authors on book tours anymore, so these things must be done by the author and well in advance of a book's release. In fact, the time to start thinking about your authorial professionalism is now.

**Brady DeSanti, Co-Editor: Understanding and Teaching Native American History**

- Going through the reappointment and tenure process, producing peer-reviewed articles, and getting published proved to be a daunting task, but one that eventually readied me to take on the most challenging project of my career - co-editing a book and writing a chapter for the same volume. I would advise that you either know your co-editor/co-author beforehand or get to know them as best as possible before embarking on a project of this scope. Do your best to set aside time to divide the workload with them. Time management is crucial, and you want to stay on task. One of the most important things to keep in mind when editing or writing a book with multiple contributors is to plan for delays and to factor that into your schedule.

**Yu-Che Chen, Co-Editor: The Oxford Handbook of AI Governance**

- What was the recipe for publishing and promoting my book? The development of my scholarship in AI governance was the first ingredient; identification and networking with leading scholars in the topic area was the second. This combination led to my role as a co-editor of a book. My co-editors and I secured a book contract with the publisher based on the caliber and interdisciplinary nature of the contributions and enhanced the coherence and quality of chapters by organizing a conference for the contributors. We utilized the publisher's resources and organized our events and activities for book promotion.



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- Colesworthy, R. (2024, June 26). How To Publish a 'Timely' Scholarly Book. The Chronicle of Higher Education.



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**Jody Keisner**  
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# Disseminating Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work

DigitalCommons@UNO showcases amazing research and creative activity at UNO. This institutional repository relies on green open access (OA), or self-archiving, to upload authors' work. This makes work free and accessible to anyone with an internet connection. It's managed by UNO Libraries' Institutional Repository Coordinator.

## Reasons You Should Contribute Your Work to DigitalCommons@UNO

Make your work easy to access and increase citations

A 2021 study found that OA repositories, like DigitalCommons@UNO, reach a wider audience beyond the general boundaries of the institution and increase researchers' global productivity and communication. This access leads to more citations and connections between researchers and disciplines.

Increase the longevity and protection of your work

Adding work to DigitalCommons is intended to be a permanent part of the repository, which isn't the case with most databases and journal websites that remove older work. According to a study by Koduna-Ntim, OA repositories help plagiarism software catch violations since the work isn't blocked behind a paywall and is easily tracked and cited.

Expand the visibility of your work

Since your work isn't behind a paywall web crawlers and search engines can easily index your work making it appear in search results with more frequency. Google, Google Scholar, and Bing are just a few of the many search engines that index DigitalCommons@UNO.

Track metrics through the dashboard

Once your work is uploaded you begin receiving emails with monthly download counts and access to the author's dashboard, where you can see a multitude of metrics, such as where your work is being accessed and social media connections.

Boost your research profile with a central location

It's advantageous to have all your work in one place, making it easier to share your work with funders, colleagues, students, and other interested parties.

## It's as easy as 1, 2, 3 – really!

### 1. Email your CV or publications list to [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

- The library will acquire all the permissions and copyright guidelines, and they contact publishers on your behalf to ensure UNO can upload your work and stay in copyright compliance.

### 2. Keep alternate versions of your work, such as the post-print (aka accepted) manuscript and the pre-print (aka submitted) manuscript.

- Sometimes the library cannot upload the final published version of your work but can upload an alternate version.

### 3. Be patient.

- There are many copyright details to work through on every published article and publishers don't always respond quickly.

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