

**Improving Student Success through Transparent Teaching**  
**November 27, 2018**  
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Research shows that all students are more successful when a faculty member is transparent with regard to her/his/their class activities and assignments. The research also shows that first generation students and students from lower socioeconomic circumstances show a marked improvement in class success when a faculty member employs transparent teaching.

Being transparent means moving the knowledge and understanding of the rationale for her/his/their class activities and assignments from the faculty member to the students. In this workshop, we will discuss and practice using one mechanism for making assignments more transparent. That mechanism is below.

**Mechanism**

To make an assignment more transparent, faculty can clarify these three components of an assignment for their students.

1. **Purpose**—*why* are you giving the assignment?

- explain the content knowledge that students will gain from doing the work
- explain the skills that the students are developing as they do the work
- explain how the knowledge and skills will benefit the students now and beyond the course, even after graduation

2. **Task**—*how* should the student do the assignment?

- explain clearly the steps that students need to take to complete the assignment [doing so reduces unnecessary trial-and-error for students trying to start a task and allows the students to spend the majority of their time on acquiring the knowledge and skills that the professor wants them to acquire]
- check in with students after you explain the assignment [Winkelmes indicates that what is clear to faculty may not always be clear to students]—ask the students what their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and next steps will be and discuss until everyone is clear on the requisite steps]

3. **Criteria**—*what* are the characteristics of excellent work? [Providing this information allows the students to self-evaluate whether they are on the correct path.]

- you can work with the students to create a collaborative example of good work before the students start the assignment; or
- you can give multiple examples of excellent work with specific indications about what made it successful; this method avoids having the students feeling obligated to adhere to any one particular model; or
- you can provide a checklist of characteristics of successful work that students can use while working on the task

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