

Mary: Welcome to Course Stories, produced by the instructional design and new media team of EdPlus at Arizona State University. In this podcast, we tell an array of course design stories alongside other ASU online designers and faculty. On today's course story...

Alicia: This course started out crawling. It's flying now, but it was a very rough start, and I'm very fortunate. I recognize my privilege. I know that not everybody gets to teach the same courses over and over again. There are instructors out there who are thrown into four new preps, five new preps every single semester. I'm very sensitive to that. For the people who are in the position to work on a course over a period of time, I feel like it's almost an obligation, right? Because I'm given this privilege, this opportunity to teach the same course, so it's my responsibility to leave it better than when I found it. And if I left it to myself and I get it back for myself, then I always have to work to improve it a little bit more.

Mary: Hi, I'm Mary Loder, an instructional designer from ASU Online.

Ricardo: I'm Ricardo Leon. I'm a media specialist at the same place.

Mary: Yeah, we work together.

Ricardo: Let's get on with the show.

Mary: Okay.

Ricardo: You ready?

Mary: I'm ready.

Ricardo: Do you have stuff you want to talk about? Okay.

Mary: I'm ready. I'm really excited about this next episode. You're recording, right?

Ricardo: Yeah.

Mary: Oh, thank god.

Ricardo: Usually I start by saying, "Hey, Mary." I mean, it doesn't have to be a thing.

Mary: Hey, Ricardo. I'm trying new things.

Ricardo: Yeah, Let's do... Yeah, let's totally experiment. In our last episode, we talked to Regina Revazova, and she told us in podcasting, you should experiment.

Mary: Experiment.

Ricardo: So, well, yeah.

Mary: It's true. And humor's good for podcasts, because I mean, also entertainment. And aren't we entertaining, folks?

Ricardo: Aren't we?

Mary: Is that why you keep coming back?

Ricardo: Let us know.

Mary: Are you coming back?

Ricardo: Give us feedback, give us ratings and reviews, and tell us how entertaining or not entertaining we are. We also have a Twitter as well, @CourseStories on Twitter.

Mary: And it's getting some good reviews, you guys, from me and my mom.

Ricardo: So Mary, who do we have on the show today?

Mary: Oh, I'm so excited. We have Alicia Montalvo. She is, oh, she's a delightful human being. She has so much wonderful energy.

Ricardo: Yes.

Mary: She cares so much. She works with our instructional designer, Tamara Mitchell, like they're besties. Anything Tamara says, Alicia is like, "Let's do it." And they've done so much. And she was a part of our ASU Online faculty showcase because of the work that they've done. She does so much good stuff, and Tamara is so knowledgeable. Oh my gosh, we're so lucky to have her on our design team.

Ricardo: Tamara's great. We just did a workshop, online workshop, for-

Mary: Oh, yeah, podcasting.

Ricardo: ... for podcasting, so-

Mary: That's a great workshop too.

Ricardo: Yeah, maybe we can link that in the show notes.

Mary: Oh, that's a great idea. Look at us keep these through line, like we planned it.

Ricardo: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mary: We didn't

Ricardo: Synergy.

Mary: So I do want to just touch on a couple of things. One, Alicia's energy is part of what makes her course work so well. And then, two, Tamara's suggestions are the other part of why this course works so well. And I really wanted to highlight those two things, because I think it's really critical when we start getting into these instructional design conversations, course conversations, that we tap into our strengths. And there are some really good strengths in this course. I can't wait for you guys to hear about it.

EXW 217 is a fitness and flexibility class. And you would think, oh, okay, that's interesting. But it's also a class that teaches care of a person you're working with. So the intake process is a really big part of that. I think that the way that they've done this, that they've structured the intake process, has been really one of the more interesting parts as an instructional designer and the work that they put into it, because it's very much like a storytelling experience, but using Rise, which is a product made by Articulate that you really need to have your stuff together if you're going to work with your instructional designer in that space. And I think they're actually giving us a behind-the-scenes look at the kind of documentation that went into the work before Rise was even created. So you can really get a good understanding of how much work that you need to put in, but the output is worth it. It is so beautiful when it gets into that product.

Ricardo: Yeah. Oh, I have no idea what you're talking about, but we'll maybe explore what Rise is in the episode.

Mary: I think we're going to also give a link as a sample in the show notes.

Ricardo: Great. We ready to jump in?

Mary: I'm ready.

Ricardo: All right. Let's do it.

Tamara: Hey, Alicia. It's good to see you.

Alicia: Hello. Very natural. Good to see you.

Tamara: Great. Insert quippy thing here. So I'm Tamara Mitchell, and I've been able to work with Alicia, who's absolute party on two legs. She's so much fun. We had a lot of fun working on this course. And so basically the last 10 years, I've been designing, developing online courses. And I've taught online for seven and a half years, so I know exactly how daunting and sometimes frustrating it can be when you're trying to make course updates and trying to figure out the right updates. And so this has been just kind of a work, a labor of love, being able to work with Alicia and work on this course because she's adventurous.

So I've got an MA in English language and literature, and a Master's of Science in education and information technology and instructional design. And so I currently work on the instructional design and new media team as an instructional designer with EdPlus. And I specifically work with online courses, and the majority of my work is with

the College of Health Solutions, which is how I know Alicia, which has been absolutely awesome.

Alicia: My name is Alicia Montalvo. I'm a lecturer in movement sciences in the College of Health Solutions at ASU. I teach in the movement sciences neighborhood, and I'll teach a variety of classes. Mostly I teach lower-level or intro-type courses for fitness people who plan to pursue fitness, wellness, healthy lifestyles. So the majors I teach in are clinical exercise science, exercise and wellness, healthy lifestyles, and fitness sciences. I like to teach classes that are more applied. I'm a certified athletic trainer, so I like to teach in the courses that are foundational to clinical degrees such as physical therapy, athletic training, occupational therapy. I feel that that's what I enjoy the most, and I feel that's where I excel the most.

Tamara: So, Alicia, tell me a little bit about your course. Where did you start with it? And then we can get into some of the updates that you made.

Alicia: Yeah. I started teaching the course when I started at ASU in 2019, the fall of 2019. I taught it twice on ground, and then the course coordinator just handed it to me and said, "All right, now this summer, you are assigned to convert this to online." I probably took that more literally than I should have, and so I actually just took the class and I put everything into an online format. So the on-ground class is very hands-on, lab-based, practicing skills. And I thought, "Well, just because students are online, why should that stop them from getting the same content that students get when they're on ground?" So I decided not to change any of the course materials in terms of the labs, and I just added supplementary materials to make it easier for students to be able to complete those more independently than having me lead them through step-by-step every single little thing that they were doing.

So lots of tutorials, lots of mini lectures. I took a lot of trainings through ASU Online, through EdPlus, and I saw one where they did mini lectures and there was a video on mini lectures. And I kind of deconstructed that mini lecture video, and I started to make my own outlines. So that's how I became an expert in mini lectures, which was a lot of fun. So I created a lot of those supporting materials, but obviously I still felt like things were missing, falling through the cracks, which is why I kind of continuously tinkered with the class till we met.

Tamara: Well, and I like that you talked about continuously tinkering. I think when you are working on courses, you think you have to do everything all at once, and it's so, so daunting. But when you realize that you just make small updates, you figure out how students respond to those updates, and then you make another update. And this has been really quite the process for you over the last, since 2019, just making these small updates.

Mary: Okay, hold on. I want to just back up for a second and I want to talk about the course overhaul. I'm a big supporter of course overhaul.

Ricardo: Yeah.

Mary: One of the things that she pointed out that has to do with your team, so sorry if I'm giving you more work, is that videos really need to be redone at least every five years. I mean, we don't want videos that look like they're from the '80s or the '90s, or even the early 2000s.

Ricardo: You might have a haircut you don't support anymore.

Mary: Fair enough. Like me. I just cut my hair short.

Ricardo: You look great.

Mary: Thank you. I appreciate it. So course overhaul. This includes any videos that are over five years. You have our endorsement. Tell your leads.

Ricardo: What other things besides videos, what kind of indicators would you recommend being cognizant of as you go, okay, now it's time to update this course?

Mary: Well, let's say you just moved your course online a couple years ago, and you just basically took what you did in the classroom and directly translated that online. But now you've learned what it's like to be an online facilitator and potentially even branched out and learned some new technology, so you might have additional ideas for assessments. Heck, I mean, the industry's changed too, so maybe your objectives change, and if your objectives are changing, almost everything changes then.

Oh, also, if the instructor changes. If you have a normal instructor of record and they've done all the videos, all the content, they retired, I don't know, they left the university, and now there's a new instructor of record who's going to be the ongoing person for that course, not just this one semester but you know that this is an investment, that's a good time to do a course overhaul, because it should be your tone. It should be what you care about. It should be your objectives and your videos, going back to videos again. Sorry, more work.

Ricardo: Right. No, well, we are always trained to encourage and capture instructor presence in our videos.

Mary: Absolutely.

Ricardo: So when necessary, there might be an instructor who is not the person who's the one that appears in the videos, but it is very helpful when the student has a face to go with the name that they're communicating with online.

Mary: Absolutely. And that doesn't necessarily hold a course overhaul need, not a full redesign, but a refresh where, hey, we just need to freshen up the videos a little bit. So maybe overview videos are done by the new instructor, but the lectures are still done by the legacy instructor. That could be a thing as well. But that's not really a course overhaul. That's just making it shinier.

- Ricardo: So this concept of tinkering, I really appreciate that the instructional design team encourages tinkering.
- Mary: Absolutely. We are proponents of, if we are done with your new course development, that doesn't mean our relationship is over. In fact, we like when you reach back out to us and you talk about the new things you've thought about and you ask our opinion. We love that. Who doesn't sharing what they know? And it's such a delight to reconnect. So if you have already done a new course and maybe you haven't reconnected with your instructional designer, do so. We'd love to hear from you.
- Tamara: One thing that you had told me that I really love that I really want to ask about is you'd mentioned something about how you always hope that students will leave with a better understanding of how to interact with actual clients, no matter the profession they choose to pursue. And I've always thought that was interesting. So when you have such a diverse group of students and you're planning out your course, what are some of those updates that you made that you think are most impactful?
- Alicia: Obviously the course kind of lends itself to that, right? Because the main thing I did when I put it online was I really encouraged students to pick a client that they would work with for the whole semester. Obviously that's not required. You can't predict who's going to be available, when they're going to be available, if they're going to be available every time you need them. So that's the common thread, though. Every module, it encourages students to work with their quote-unquote client for whatever the activity is, and the activities build on each other until the ultimate assignment, which is the most quote-unquote application, right? Low levels of application.
- Tamara: So, Alicia, who are your students?
- Alicia: So this is an online course taught for healthy lifestyles and fitness sciences. I've been so inspired by these students. I really love teaching in this program. They're mostly a mix of, I would say, Starbucks employees, because there are students through the Starbucks partners program, and then usually older people who are either never got a chance to go to college or are looking for a career change. Most of my students, I would say about 50% of them, want to go on to become some sort of a health or a wellness coach, and a majority of the other students want to do a mix of personal training. They're either already working as personal trainers, they want to work as personal trainers, or they want to go on to professional school such as physical therapy school, PA, medical school, things like that.
- But I just am so inspired by these students working full times, having family, and just still excelling in the classroom online. They're very self-directed learners, which I love. I want to teach to all students, obviously, but I want to provide an added value to the students who are really, really into it. The ones who are going to click on every single link, those students speak to me. I'm a link-clicker.
- Tamara: Well, and one thing that your course offers is that it offers an ability for students who are not really going into the field, that they're not going to be personal trainers. They

can still jump into your course and they can get something out of it and they can apply it to their own lives, because they're actually putting together plans from the concepts that they're learning. You've planned out an experience that's really well aligned with some clear objectives and outcomes. So what are you wanting the students to get out of this course?

Alicia: The main thing that I'm wanting students to be able to do when they finish is to be able to find guidelines. So in this class, we use the American College of Sports Medicine guidelines, ACSM Guidelines on Fitness and Flexibility. So my top priority is for students to be able to identify and understand those guidelines, and then to be able to apply them on the most basic level. If they're going to prescribe some stretching for somebody, at least let it meet the minimum guidelines for the ACSM guidelines. If they're going to prescribe some cardiovascular exercise, at least we'll let them work towards the minimum guidelines and let them understand what it means to screen a client to make sure that they're not going to die when they start exercising. Keep clients safe, right? That's ultimately the thing, because in protecting your clients, you're protecting yourself. So those are the main things that I'm looking for students to be able to do when they finish, is not kill someone.

Tamara: I could see that [inaudible]. Yeah, well, and you kind of mentioned a little bit about coaching skills, right? So what are some of those coaching skills that you want them to come away with?

Alicia: Yeah, in the first module, students do client intake and a pre-participation screen. So I think this is particularly important nowadays, because almost everything is client-facing in some way. And especially the students that I have, let's say they don't even want to be personal trainers. Well, they're going to have to client face with whoever it is they're trying to sell their services to. And this is kind of working on that. It's like, how do we talk to other people? What are the sorts of questions we want to ask? The difference between open and closed-ended questions. I mean, very basic interviewing 101. We want to ask some open-ended questions, get some more information. How is it that you act when you're talking to somebody else? I think a lot of times students can, since they don't understand what that interaction is like, they could take the breath out of the room by talking too much. And it's like, well, you're trying to get information from them. You're not just trying to sell them all the time. I think some very basic things about interacting with other people that translates across no matter what, even if it's specific to personal training, they're going to need to be able to do these things if they're a PA, if they're a doctor, if they're a physical therapist, if they're a wellness coach. Doesn't matter what it is.

Tamara: Right. So it sounds a lot like your course is really not only teaching some clear concepts, but it's actually got a lot of practical application in that. When you took over the course, when this course was given to you to teach, was there that same practical application or was that something you added?

Alicia: I think there was definitely practical application for the on-ground course, but what I didn't feel that it had was the order. I felt like the concepts were like... I didn't

understand the order that it was in, and I'd always learned that you want to teach things in the way that people need to know them. So I kind of took the class and I rearranged the pieces and I had to force some square pegs into some round holes, but I made it work. And so now it flows in the same way that a client interaction might flow.

So the first thing you start with is your interview, your pre-participation screen, learning fundamentals about behavior change, behavior modification, the sort of strategies that you can use to do that. Then we go into fitness assessment, different types of fitness assessment. We go into warm-ups and cool-downs using the information from the fitness assessment and the interview to make warm-ups and cool-downs, and then into cardiovascular exercise and finishing with creating a one-day routine from top to bottom for a whole person using two different types of modalities.

So I think it was all there. It just needed some additional activities and some ways to tie all of the concepts together in a way that made sense for real life.

Tamara: Well, and I think that that's a really interesting perspective, because when we started talking about the course and we started talking about where are students struggling, where are they doing really well, you mentioned that they were doing really well with actually working through the logical sequence of working with a client, which was great. And where we found the students were sticking were those areas that you still hadn't tinkered with. I love you use the expression tinkered with. You still hadn't tinkered with those areas yet. And so we had some interesting places to kind of go from there. When you were looking for areas that students struggled, what were you actually seeing that prompted us to make those updates?

Alicia: I think it was just mainly seeing different students make the same mistakes over and over, over different iterations of the course. So when you see that happening, it's natural to be like, "But it's in here. It's not my fault. It's in here. They just need to look at it." But when you're seeing it repeatedly, at a certain point, you got to take a long, hard look in the mirror and say, "I am doing something to contribute to the perpetuation of this problem." So the things that we did, such as implementing the 5E Model of Instruction where we added some practice in to address specifically those sticking points made a difference. And I've loved doing that so much that not only am I doing that in my own classes, but now I'm like, if I teach somebody else's class, I'm like, "Hey, what do you think about adding practice here for this mistake that students are making over and over again?" So it's infectious.

Tamara: I like that. I like that, because when we were first talking about the updates we wanted to make in the course, the 5E model just kind of made sense, right?

Alicia: Yeah. Absolutely.

Tamara: We wanted them to explore, wanted them to be active participants in this course instead of passive participants. And the 5E model that you're talking about basically has five different steps. And the first step is really to engage the learner. We want to make sure that they're invested and engaged in the learning cycle so we get their attention,

we get their interest, we start to kind of help surface those knowledge gaps that they have. And then the second step is really to explore. So then the students actively explore that concept and they actually do that in a very concrete way, which was pretty fun in your course. And your explore step was already really good. I think we just added the engage and then the explain steps.

And then the third step is really the explain step, where the students are kind of synthesizing the knowledge that they have so they can figure out, okay, this is what I'm learning, this is what I need to learn. And then the elaborate step is very contextual. So they have to be able to do that within a particular context. And that's another area I think that we've built on. So they elaborated over... It was that... Weren't they having a little bit of difficulty between, I think it was the explain step and then right when they got to the... They actually had to do, actually working with a client and putting together a plan, and they were kind of struggling on some points with that.

Alicia: Yeah, so all of the modules look the same. We took the material that I already had and then we just added a few pieces. So you added the Rise 360 scenarios for the first E, then I think for the second E, it was using the learning materials. Then they took the quiz and then they took a-

Tamara: The third E was explain, right?

Alicia: The explain, yeah.

Tamara: They had to be quizzed on some of the basic concepts so that they knew that they-

Alicia: Mm-hmm, the foundational knowledge. Yeah.

Tamara: Right, foundational, before they got into actually using those by putting together and the elaborate step.

Alicia: Which is where they did the practice quiz and we identified those sticking points, made sure we addressed them there.

Tamara: No, I think the most interesting part was when we overlaid the 5E model with what you were already doing in the course. It was pretty self-explanatory. We thought, hey, students. We didn't get the students' attention right here, and they didn't get to practice before they actually needed to use the steps to be able to create something for a client. And those two pieces just kind of snapped together like Legos.

Alicia: It was a tremendous labor to get together the information for the scenarios, which my TA Jen Wickler did. She did amazing. A mad props to her. She was awesome, and she worked with me over the summer to do that. That was something that she wanted to learn about that stuff anyway, so that worked out great. And then the other thing that we did was add those practice quizzes, which another TA, Brittany Wheeler, did for me where we identified those sticking points and added those additional questions. And those were just five multiple-choice, 10 multiple-choice questions, which, if you recall, I

brought that up to the TAs and there was an explosive debate among among my EXW 217 TAs about whether or not to add more stuff to the course. But once we ran the initial course with the changes, they were all sold. They were ready. They were on board. I said, "Let's just try it. Let's see what happens." And then they all come back and said, "Oh my god, the performance is so much better. You have to keep it this way." So it ended up being great.

Ricardo: Okay, Mary, I'm a little lost. What is this 5E model of instruction?

Mary: So it's a learning cycle for instructional design. It's a model that we can use, and it's really well known in the sciences. Actually, Tamara Mitchell is the one who told me about it because I came from corporate design, not science design. And I was working in a physics course and she was onboarding, so I was her mentor. And she was helping me, and she was like, "Wow, you really should start using this 5E model of instruction."

Ricardo: It's a process.

Mary: It's a process. So the first part is engaging the learner, getting them turned on to what they're learning and helping them understand why it's important in their world and why they should care. So getting the hook. And then the next piece is exploring. So they can explore content that you've created. They can be given an open opportunity to just go and explore on their own. And then explaining it, so can they explain what they've explored and learned about? And then they can elaborate even more. So elaboration might happen after an assignment and you want them to explore it deeper or peer review. I don't know. It can be lots of things. And then also it's just a way for them to extend their understanding.

But then you get into the evaluation phase, and then the cycle starts again. And so getting someone to engage with the content, explore the content, explain the content, either you or them as the instructor, and then elaborating more deeply, and then evaluating them after they've been able to articulate their learning even more deeply. It's a great method for creating connection to content that might feel a little outside of maybe relevancy.

Ricardo: Awesome.

Mary: I'm sure Tamara did a better job explaining that in [inaudible].

Ricardo: No, that was great. I totally understand it. I think that we should apply it for one of our future episodes.

Mary: Oh, that's a good idea. We should.

Ricardo: Let's try it. Why not?

Mary: All right.

Ricardo: Experiment. That's the sixth E.

Mary: The hard one we're going to have is the hook. No, I'm just kidding. We're great at those, guys, right?

Ricardo: That's the only thing we're good at.

Mary: We love listening to these.

Tamara: Well, I love that you said that, because ultimately, I mean, you still have to test it. When you work with students, you pay attention to what students are doing, and then when you can see this performance go up, you've done the right things and you don't need to make those particular types of changes. I thought it was really interesting. I don't know if you noticed this, but I thought it was really interesting on... You know, you mentioned that there was a lot of work and it was pretty straightforward, but a lot of it was just very hands-on and collaborative and practical. So you were able to bring in people to help with the scripting of it, and then you were able to... You know, you had some really great TAs. What are your favorite changes that we made?

Alicia: I have loved Yellowdig. I was using Yellowdig before, but I wasn't using it in this way. I had been playing with Yellowdig for quite some time since it was first introduced. I first started using it as an extra credit space where I could learn to use it, students could get exposure to it, and we could see how it went. And then gradually I started adding, implementing more into the class. But then we kind of ended up using Yellowdig specifically as part of evaluate.

Tamara: It was the evaluate, because we wanted to add a reflection that was very public so they could see other learners' experiences and build on that. Yeah.

Alicia: So I had some of the evaluate stuff in the assignments themselves, where I was asking students to reflect on their experiences to some metacognitive stuff. But I really feel Yellowdig is what really, I don't know, brought it all together, where students could really connect what was going on in the classroom with their own lives, in their own experiences. And in my experience, that's where the deepest learning happens, when you're making those types of connections.

I think that that has been the thing. And it was easy. I mean, Yellowdig auto-grades. I just need to go in there and, accolades, make it rain accolades on these. And it's been awesome to see the sorts of conversations that go on in there, to see the community building, to see students making connections not just with the material but with each other, too, right? As distance learners, they're often isolated, and that's feedback I get from students a lot, that they don't feel connected with their classmates. They're like, "I'm out here all by myself." So to be able to see them interact with each other and build relationships among themselves is pretty cool too.

Tamara: Well, and I think when we're looking at the elaborate step and we're trying to help students build relationships, sometimes we do reflections that are just individual

reflections. I liked that it was a group reflective process so that they could build off one another. I think that made a difference too.

Well, one of the things that I thought was kind of fun that we did, I thought the scenarios were actually kind of fun to build because we just automatically assume that we're so interesting that students are just going to automatically be interested in what we're going to teach them, that their learning materials that we are excited about, they're going to be excited about. So I think that it was fun to give them a situation that they could play with that was optional that they could use to get their attention, or if they were already excited about the content, they could go straight to the content. So that was the intent, right?

Alicia: Yeah. I love the scenarios personally. And I told you this, I had a TA who had mixed, very... well, not very mixed feelings, just not good feelings about it. But in the years since we've made the scenarios, I've gotten a lot of feedback from students that they like the scenarios. So I know that it's good for the students who are using them. And like I said earlier, that's good enough for me. The students who really want to immerse themselves and learn more, and maybe I'm only reaching those students, you know what? That's okay with me. But I really feel strongly that any student who engages with those scenarios comes away with a really firm understanding of the value of the material they're about to learn.

That's a big part of my teaching framework, my teaching motivation framework. I'm looking to hammer that value for students. I'm looking to provide them with support through feedback, and I'm looking to build their own self-efficacy and their belief that they're capable. For me, the scenarios are very important in motivating students intrinsically by showing them, oh, this has value in real life. Oh my gosh, I want to pursue this type of career. I really need to get serious about this content and learn how to do this.

Tamara: Well, and when we're thinking about other changes that you made, how do you think that your experience and the changes that you made in this course might... If someone's not teaching exercise science, how can your updates help them or your experience making updates help them?

Alicia: What I really like about the changes that we made was that they weren't random. So sometimes you have a class and you're like, I have this much time. I have this many resources. I have this TA. And then you're like, okay, I'm going to make changes. You've made a decision to make changes to a class. But the fact of the matter is, we teach frameworks. We teach frameworks to students, and we teach frameworks to students because they need them in order to be successful in whatever they plan to do.

So in my class, for example, I teach frameworks for behavior change. I teach frameworks for motivation. So I need to use those same frameworks in my teaching in order to organize how I'm thinking and what I'm delivering. So this fit really well with my, like I mentioned, it fit really well with my framework on teaching motivation, so motivating students to learn. And I think that we as instructors need to think about that, not

randomly throwing poop at a wall and seeing what sticks, but really thinking critically about what we're doing, how we're doing it, what framework are we using, and then using that to help us make decisions about the changes that we're going to make.

So that was what was most important to me, is like, oh, she has shown me this, I could say no to it, but I have these beliefs and I have these problems, so this is a good way for me to spend my time, energy, and resources. And I would want to encourage anyone else who's thinking about undertaking changes to their classes to have the same thought process. What framework are you going to use? What do you value? What sorts of mistakes are you seeing? And instead of randomly making changes, use a structure. Organize your thoughts so that you're getting the most bang for your buck when you're making those changes.

Tamara: And I think that was the best part about our collaborative relationship, and why faculty and instructional designers work together, because I was able to bring a framework, you were able to bring the pain points, what you've done in the past, and what you think we should do in the future, and we were able to meld that together into something that I think ended up working better than if we... The sum of the parts was better than what the separate would've been.

So do you think that... You're telling people that they should use frameworks, and there might be people out there who think, ew, gross, what? They're not excited about throwing poop at a wall, but then by the frameworks on the other side might have that same reaction. What about the process as far as using a framework? Do you think it was easier, harder? What was that for you?

Alicia: Well, first of all, I would like to encourage anyone who does not like throwing poop at a wall to contact me so that we can try throwing poop at the wall together to see what sticks best.

Tamara: That's going to be left in there. You know that, right?

Alicia: That's, like, my favorite thing, is to throw poop at the wall. Yeah, I think using... I know that... I feel eye rolls when I talk about frameworks even to students and when I'm trying to hammer the value of frameworks, but I really can't emphasize enough how valuable I find frameworks to be. And I'm just going to put that plug for that book that we talked about of Susan Ambrose's, *How Learning Works*. Has some really great frameworks in there. Great frameworks on student motivation, on self-directed learning. And I read that book many years ago, and I still use all those things today. And I think it's worth the investment of figuring out what works for you, because it makes everything easier in the long run.

If somebody gives you a platter of a thousand possibilities, but you have a very narrow set of beliefs and frameworks, it's going to make picking from that platter of a thousand so much easier. I already know I don't need to worry about all of these other things. I'm just worried about my motivation through self-efficacy, through value, and through feedback. And I don't need to worry about anything else unless I'm seeing problems

here and there. But I really think that choosing a framework might be more labor-intensive on the front end, but the benefits in the long run in terms of how you're allocating your resources is a no-brainer.

Tamara: Well, and I think we talked earlier, and you even talked a little bit about how the scientific method is an experiment where you've got your hypothesis. You think you're going to do this thing. You want to test it out. Is your hypothesis something that's going to work? And people are who are too afraid to play around with their courses on a certain level to experiment and to make changes that are intentional that they track to see how it works, they're the ones that get bored of teaching their courses. And you've got this fire and enthusiasm for all of your courses.

Alicia: Compulsion, unhealthy compulsion.

Tamara: Part of that's you, but a lot of it is your willingness to try new things. I don't know if I've ever told you this, but my dad's an optometrist. And I always loved the idea, I think of frameworks as putting on a pair of glasses. You see things in a new way through the lens of a different framework. And there are things in your courses that I think what we put on the framework of the 5E model, it was like, oh, okay, those two things we need to do right away. We need to add the evaluate portion for Yellowdig because they're not reflecting on their experience. And then good things came from that. And so I like the adventurous spirit of frameworks.

You had also mentioned, and we really wanted to ask about this, was your... How does your annual evaluation play a big role in incentivizing the faculty behavior to improve courses?

Alicia: Yeah, this is the thing that I think is the most important, right? Because if I'm not incentivized, I mean, like I said, unhealthy compulsion to overachieve. But aside from that, we have this annual evaluation, which gives me the framework by which I can overachieve. It tells me where to allocate my resources. But in my college, the dean, I have to give her lots of props. She has given the faculty a lot of power over how we're evaluated. We have committees that make the evaluations for everyone. I'm subject to the teaching evaluations mostly. And so the criteria are very straightforward, and some of the things that we're evaluated on are making substantive changes to courses.

And I have to say that when you are an academic, you have the option to spend your time in a variety of ways. You could spend your time mentoring students. You could spend your time doing educational research or other types of research. You could spend your time doing service. There's no limit to the number of things you could do that you could put on your annual evaluation. But when your annual evaluation specifically outlines that you can get a five on this part, a five out of five on this part, if you do one substantive overhaul of a course, well, guess what? Here I am. I'm here. Sign me up. I'm going to do my overhaul, right? That's a big deal to me. That's... Don't play with my money. I'm going to do what I can to get my money.

But also, obviously student outcomes are very important too. But I think that making that evaluative criteria for faculty very clear and writing substantive course overhauls into that is extremely important, because some people are burnt out. They're tired. I get it. It's been a rough couple years. You have to have a lot of energy for this sort of thing, and I'm not just talking Red Bull energy or coffee energy. I'm talking perhaps methamphetamine energy. I'm not a proponent of [inaudible].

Tamara: Can we recommend that? That might not be a course I [inaudible] we recommend. Ricardo has a screen [inaudible] can not recommend anything [inaudible]... Yeah.

Alicia: Yeah, so-

Tamara: But I do think that that's an important distinction, though. When we're thinking about systemic change and change to individual courses, the system can actually support for all of the leaders out there who have the power to move course updates and the student experience to the forefront of the conversation. That has to be part of the evaluation, is what you're saying.

Alicia: 100%. It has to be. And like I said, it does require a lot of energy. But you know as well as I do that this course started out crawling. It's flying now, but it was a very rough start.

Tamara: [inaudible].

Alicia: And I'm very fortunate. I recognize my privilege. I know that not everybody gets to teach the same courses over and over again. There are instructors out there who are thrown into four new preps, five new preps every single semester. I'm very sensitive to that. For the people who are in the position to work on a course repeatedly over a period of time, I feel like it's almost an obligation, right? Because I'm given this privilege, this opportunity to teach the same course, so it's my responsibility to leave it better than when I found it. And if I left it to myself and I get it back for myself, then I always have to work to improve it a little bit more. And that's how we ended up where we are now. I didn't start out with an amazing course. I think it's pretty good now. I would continue to tinker if I wasn't already working on other projects. But at least I feel good about the work I've done over the years that it's been a slow burn, not crazy amounts of work all at once, but kind of chipping away at it over time.

Ricardo: Listeners, as promised, I know you've been waiting. Rise. What is it?

Mary: I'm going to literally read it off of the website. Rise is made by Articulate. It's called Rise 360, and it's a responsive course authoring platform.

Ricardo: Course authoring platform.

Mary: Right.

Ricardo: So, software.

Mary: You can create content and then you can download that content from the Rise platform, and you can upload it into Canvas, and it could be just content someone interacts with, or it could be a knowledge check where it's actually an assignment.

Ricardo: So it's kind of a software that helps you organize all these disparate pieces and makes them interactive and-

Mary: Pretty.

Ricardo: ... connects them together. And pretty.

Mary: Yeah, and it's almost like storytelling, kind of. If you think about how you can format how your students are going to consume your content, it can be very intentional and position an image that's associated with a quote, that's associated with the content you're going to learn, that's associated with a clip from a podcast or a YouTube video. And so it's a really dynamic way to create a flow to your content.

And you can also create knowledge checks. That could be for a grade on a complete/incomplete basis. So formative activities are really well designed and utilized in Rise. But Rise is also a product that once you build it, you have to download the thing you built and then upload it into Canvas. And so making changes is not easy, and so it's really important to be mindful. So thinking of what images you want to use that are paired with the text you want to use, and do you want to put an audio over that text, because you can do that. And then do you want to have a multiple-choice question afterwards or flashcards or a matching activity? So it creates this really active learning space for these formative moments, and it's really pretty.

Ricardo: And now I know what Rise is.

Mary: Boom.

Ricardo: And also, I'm going to follow the link in the show notes to find even more about it.

Mary: And I'm not going to think I can just do it on the fly. I'm going to work with an instructional designer and write a whole script. Check out the show notes to see how much work you need to do.

Ricardo: But it's worth it.

Mary: Totally worth it. When you nail it, you are going to love it.

Tamara: So Alicia, how are you actually measuring substantive change, number one, and number two, how are you tracking that over time?

Alicia: So, yeah, substantive change obviously is a subjective term, but to me a substantive change is not like updating a textbook and changing a few chapters here and there. It's like overhauling an assignment, overhauling a set of assignments, adding serious

module content such as tutorials, mini lectures. I mean, those things take a long time to put together. And I'm not just saying one or two. I mean five or six, or one per module at least. I would say that's probably what I would classify as a substantive change, one major addition or change to every single module in a class, such that it's not the same class as it was before you finished.

And in terms of measuring, I've gotten a lot of feedback from my TAs that they saw... I had the same set of TAs. I think we launched the changes... We ran Fall A of 2021, that's when we finalized the changes, and then we ran Fall B of 2021. And I had the same set of TAs in Fall A and Fall B. And they're the ones, actually, who came to me. They were doing a majority of the grading. And they came to me and they said, "Oh my god, this worked. I don't know what you did, but it worked." We put all those fears of too many additions to the modules to bed after that.

And then recently I just ran another iteration of the course now in Summer A without any TA, so I did all the grading myself. And this was by far the best semester of student performance I have ever seen. And it had been a while since I had done a majority of the grading, because I've been very fortunate to recruit excellent TAs. But I was just beside myself. I even put in announcements, this is the best I've ever seen. I mean, I must have finished with five A-pluses, 15 to 20 A's or something like that, and then scattered a little bit below that. I was just like, you have to give credit to the students for putting in the work, but then you also have to reach around, give yourself a little pat on the back too, because you know that they couldn't have done it without you.

Tamara: Well, and when you're making those updates and you're noticing in grades, the students are actually performing at a higher level, you're probably also noticing that you don't have to answer a bazillion and two emails clarifying the assignment questions or reteaching a concept too, right? Did that kind of-

Alicia: Yeah, actually, that was one of the first changes I made, I think in the... One summer I took every single ASU Online, which is how Mary became famous in my house.

Tamara: Webinars?

Alicia: Yeah, the webinars. I took some on writing instructions, writing clear and concise instructions, something like that. So I did that first, and then I was still having problems. So then I created a video series called How to Be Successful on blah, blah blah. And that has been the absolute best thing I have ever done, because I hardly ever get student questions and almost all students do the things... If they're putting in the effort, they're doing it right. So in these How to Be Successful video series, I take samples of old student work, bad student work. I used to use good student work, but then I found that students were plagiarizing the student work that I was using in the video, so I had to switch it to bad student work. And I open the student work up on one side and the rubric up on the other side, and then I would walk exactly through how I would grade the assignment so that it was... You're talking about transparency of grading on steroids. I got clear instructions, I got rubrics, and I got a video walking you through how I'm going to grade you.

I felt like I used to get a lot of emails about the anxious students, the ones who were unsure, they weren't clear on what to do but they wanted to get A's. This is for them, right? Hey, this is for you girls. This is for you guys. Oh, this is for you, non-gender conforming everybody. It really just helps students see exactly what they needed to do, what right answers were, what wrong... Well, I mean, there's always more than one right answer, but it helped them to definitely see what wrong answers were and exactly what I was looking for. And I have felt like those two things have made... and that was not a huge time commitment, but it has made a huge difference in student performance.

Tamara: That makes a big difference when you've got clear instructions and you've got an explanation video telling students exactly what you're looking for in the assignment, which is really great.

Alicia: Yeah.

Tamara: So you actually have, and I already know the answer to this question. I'm going to ask it anyway. Do you actually have examples or do you rely on the videos?

Alicia: Do you mean examples of good student work, or-

Tamara: Of good student work, or do you rely on videos?

Alicia: No, I stopped giving examples of good student work because I was having trouble with students just copying it and putting it in their own lab, unfortunately. I still run into that a little bit with the tutorials I have, but I have found that students have been able to tweak it enough where I'm like, all right, you're a little borderline there, but I'll take it. I see what you're doing here, but it's okay. So I tend not to give A, B, C work only, and I used to do that many moons ago, but this is the only reason why. And so the only samples that I do give are obviously my tutorials, and then the samples of poor student work and how I will evaluate that only to avoid this problem of plagiarism.

But I have to say, I have enabled Turnitin on all of my submissions, and it is a very rare... I cannot remember the last time I found a student plagiarizing. I know that there's work on there on Course Hero. I know, but I haven't had that issue in years.

Tamara: And you think a lot of it is that when students understand what's happening in the assignment, they're more likely to feel comfortable with the work and they're willing to do that themselves as opposed to seeking somebody else's work.

Alicia: I absolutely attribute it to that. So them being so clear on what... They don't have confusion about what it is that they're doing or what's expected. They know, so they just got to try.

Tamara: Alicia, how does this course story end for your students?

Alicia: I think that the students, through the changes that we made through to the course, that the story ends with them being more prepared than they were when they came in. That's always my goal, is to take them a little bit further than they were when they started. And I think that they leave with the firm understanding of how to apply concepts in real life that maybe they had known before, they'd heard about. They are maybe working as personal trainers or coaches, but now they're like, oh, I can do this right now. I know that I can do this right now. So that confidence, the self-efficacy that I'm always looking to do.

And I think that the story ends even better for all of my students, because I can take my learnings from this and bring it to other classes and make the changes that I've seen work here in other places. And so I hope it doesn't just end well for the students in this class. I hope it ends well for students who are taking any of my classes.

Tamara: And wouldn't it be nice if it ends well for students who are in a class who, maybe an instructor's listening to this and they think about the changes they want to make, and maybe it's just one small change that you suggested. And maybe it's just updating the instructions. Maybe it's just using a framework to see their course in a new way, working with their instructional designers, something like that. That would be nice too.

Alicia: Yes. Throw one piece of poop at a wall at a time, and throw them consistently at the wall over time.

Tamara: That's the best dirtiest takeaway I've heard on any podcast ever.

Alicia: Just keep throwing poop at the wall. That's it.

Tamara: Alicia, thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation. It's been fun. I've learned a lot of different things. Do you have anything that you want to plug, any resources that you want to recommend to those listeners?

Alicia: Yeah, I love the book How Learning Works by Susan Ambrose. That's my go-to. There are a couple other books that I can probably send over if you're interested in. And then we have some resources, some samples of the work that we did, if I think those are going to be available in the notes. And if you wanted to cite me, I'm an accomplished sports medicine researcher. You could check out my Google Scholar profile and cite me.

Mary: Oh, I love her.

Ricardo: Great-

Mary: I love them both.

Ricardo: ... energy. Yes, both of them. Great energy.

Mary: So good.

Ricardo: But, man, that's a... She's a spitfire.

Mary: She also loves us, which I think maybe it's like we just love on each other. I don't know. But it's so good to hang out with her. It was so nice to have her in the studio. So good.

Ricardo: And some really great things that instructors can use in their own courses.

Mary: Absolutely. And I love that she was so open to share the process, because I think that's one of the areas where we talk about how cool things can be but don't really understand the kind of work that goes into it and how important it is to work with somebody like Tamara. I mean, oh my gosh, she's so talented. If you get the opportunity to work with Tamara Mitchell or go to one of her webinars with our ASU Online webinars, go. She's awesome.

Ricardo: Yeah. All right, Mary. So what can we have the listeners do?

Mary: Oh, of course. Like, listen, and subscribe, right? Tell your friends, the international friends, the local friends, your mom and dad. We're for everybody.

Ricardo: We are.

Mary: And go to our Twitter page.

Ricardo: Yes.

Mary: Follow us. Interact with us. Let us know we're not alone.

Ricardo: Just talk to us.

Mary: Please do. And also, if you have a course that you want to highlight, you've put a lot of work into it, you worked with your instructional designer and you're proud of the things you've done, email us. Let us know. We are at [coursestories@asu.edu](mailto:coursestories@asu.edu). We would love to hear from you by email.

Ricardo: Absolutely, yes. And we could share it out on our Twitter, but also we can maybe focus and do a whole episode on it here on Course Stories.

Mary: I would love that. Also, you kind of went Bill and Ted with the you know.

Ricardo: You know. I'm a little Bill and Ted.

Mary: I love it.

Ricardo: I think they're tearing down the 7-Eleven that's here in Arizona-

Mary: No.

Ricardo: ... that they shot.

Mary: What?

Ricardo: Yeah, [inaudible].

Mary: I lived right by it.

Ricardo: Really?

Mary: Really.

Ricardo: Excellent.

Mary: Totally.

Ricardo: You know what, Mary? I'm glad that we've had such an excellent adventure on this podcast.

Mary: It's so true. Let's time travel back and go back to season one.

Ricardo: Do it all over again.

Mary: Join us, folks.

Ricardo: But we can do that by listening, and so can you, listener.

Mary: We're really good at this.

Ricardo: Be excellent-

Mary: I think it's you, but...

Ricardo: ... to each other.

Mary: Oh, be excellent to each other. It's so true.

Ricardo: Course Stories is produced by the instructional design and new media team at EdPlus at Arizona State University. Course Stories is available wherever you listen to podcasts. You can reach us at [coursestories@asu.edu](mailto:coursestories@asu.edu). If you're an instructor at ASU Online, tell us your course story and we may feature it in a future episode. Thanks for listening.