

# Five Challenges to Faculty

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Saying “our learners today are different,” he posed five challenges to how most faculty teach today. Here they are:

*“We need to move away from a shotgun approach and focus on goals and what you want your students to learn,” noted Andy K. Stanfield in his presentation at LERN’s first North American Conference on Faculty Development in Savannah this spring.*

## 1. Question the Discussion board

“We don’t need a discussion board every week,” suggests Stanfield. “The technology is still changing. We can’t be too wedded to one online course model,” he noted. We should have more interaction without points, he proposed.

## 2. Eliminate interesting but unnecessary

Eliminate interesting but unnecessary information. Some course information may be a distraction, with interesting but irrelevant material. Other devices, software, or social media may disrupt learning, interfering with working memory. And some web links are seductive, leading learners away from the objectives. We have to be far more discriminating and discerning in the age of information-overload about what content and what information we put in front of our students. A

big necessity for us as faculty in enhancing our students’ learning is to exclude extraneous information.

## 3. Don’t over-assess students

We need to reduce assessment when it gets in the way of learning, Stanfield advocated. Oftentimes, “they don’t get a chance to experiment with information because they are scared of losing points,” he noted. “How do you get students to master materials when they do not have opportunities to practice without assessment?”

## 4. Bother your faculty

As faculty developers, we should bother our faculty, pushing them out of their comfort zones, Stanfield proposed. Students can, and should advocate for change in the classroom from the bottom up. “We need to listen more to our students’ needs. They are telling us what does not work,” he said.

## 5. Dumbing down or adapting?

“Our learners today are different. They have different levels of literacy,” Stanfield noted. “Don’t confuse mastery of content and mastery of writing,” the former writing instructor said. “Most online discussion boards will penalize correct content but weak writing. So poor writers will lose points with each assignment, diminishing motivation. Mozart could not get a PhD in music today,” he suggested, “because of a focus on formality.” “How do we encourage creativity and innovation? We need to decide if we should widen our skill sets, adapting our teaching to the needs of today,” he said.



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