

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING & LEARNING

NEWSLETTER

December 2022
Volume 7

Welcome to the CETL December Newsletter

Dear PTC Faculty,

As the holiday season is upon us, the elves in the CETL are busily preparing for All Academic Affairs week, along with our partners throughout the college. We will be offering workshops on a variety of topics and have some amazing guests, including a local celebrity, to discuss workforce needs in our region. We hope this annual event will be an opportunity to get a positive jump on the second half of the academic year and spend time with your colleagues and teams.

From all of us in the CETL, we wish you a peaceful, happy holiday season filled with family and friends and good cheer.

Peace.

- Dr. Bonnie Ordonez

Dean of Education Systems and Professional Studies

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CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE
IN TEACHING & LEARNING
PITTSBURGH TECHNICAL COLLEGE

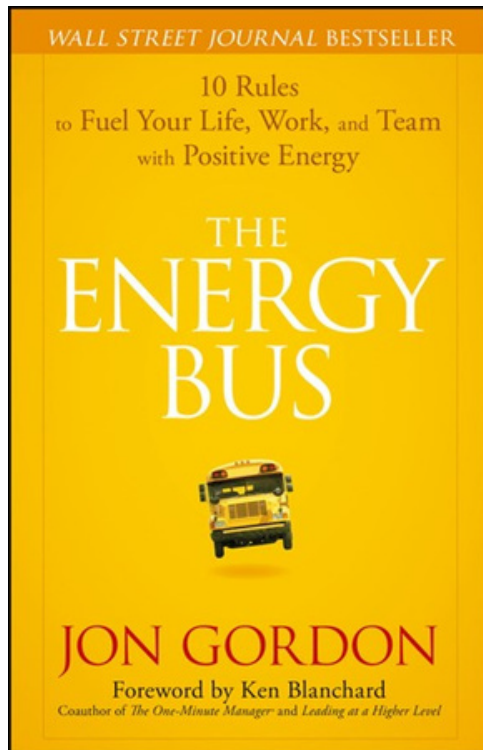


BOOK OF THE MONTH

by Dr. Stephanie Svilar

The Energy Bus

by Jon Gordon



The Energy Bus gives readers ten rules for approaching life with a positive outlook. This quick read inspires readers to change the way they think, moving from a fixed to a growth mindset. Gordon provides a powerful roadmap to overcome adversity and bring out the best in yourself and others around you. The book focuses on leadership, but the rules can be easily applied in any situation, even your personal life. Everyone faces daily challenges, but with the wisdom from The Energy Bus, you'll be able to see beyond the negative and learn to remain positive when dealing with life's obstacles.

10 RULES FOR THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

1. You're the Driver of the Bus.
2. Desire, Vision and Focus move your bus in the right direction.
3. Fuel your Ride with Positive Energy.
4. Invite People on Your Bus and Share your Vision for the Road Ahead.
5. Don't Waste Your Energy on those who don't get on your Bus.
6. Post a Sign that says "No Energy Vampires Allowed" on your Bus.
7. Enthusiasm attracts more Passengers and Energizes them during the Ride.
8. Love your Passengers.
9. Drive with Purpose.
10. Have Fun and Enjoy the Ride.

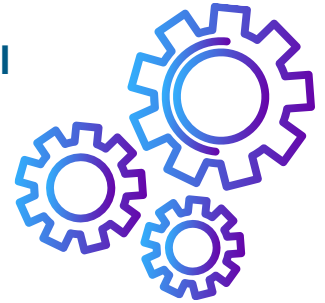


10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work and Team with Positive Energy!
www.TheEnergyBus.com

Update on Recently Combined Departments at PTC

by Nancy Feather

Did you know that the Registrar's office and the Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Accreditation department were combined at the beginning of November?



The team members and some of their primary duties are as follows:

- **Nancy Feather:** oversees the department; primary duties include accreditation, institutional (academic and non-academic) assessment, the census, institutional data requests, reporting data to third parties (e.g., IPEDS, AICUP), some surveys
- **Melissa Brown:** all areas of compliance, institutional policies, the catalog, secondary and post-secondary articulation agreements, handbooks, reporting to third parties (e.g., US Dept. of Ed., PA Dept. of Ed., Cleary)
- **Nancy Goodlin:** manual entry of application data into SIS, maintaining student files, cancellations, international student documentation; data clean-up in SIS
- **Jeanine Stone:** transcripts (high school transcript collection, post-secondary transcript requests), employer attendance and degree verifications, workflows [Note that PTC handles the transcripts for PTC and PTI students/grads, as well as the students/grads from ten other institutions that closed.]
- **Kelly Wadding:** workflows, enrollment status, roster confirmation, grade posting, commencement support (grade verification)
- **Bob Walker:** scheduling, oversees the Early Intervention Task Force, workflows, international student documentation

Overall, the department provides a variety of enrollment support services and works closely with Academic Affairs, Admissions/Enrollment, Financial Aid, and Student Advisors. And although all team members have primary responsibilities, the team has been cross-training and truly works as a team to meet daily demands.

Our office space is on Level 3 on the end of the floor where the mailboxes are, so please stop by if you need anything or to say hello.



Academic Affairs: News from Eileen's Corner of the World

by Dr. Eileen Steffan

As we approach the end of 2022, it is a great time to take stock of current initiatives, acknowledge personal milestones, and look ahead to our plans for achieving our goals. The Academic Affairs Team has much to report on project updates and many people to acknowledge and wish well. I want to share these updates in virtual-person via a Teams academic affairs town hall session.

Please join me and our academic leadership team on **Tuesday, December 20, 2022, from 4 – 5 p.m. for an Academic Affairs Town Hall** session via Teams. We are excited to share the following:

- Updates on our Faculty Titling initiative,
- Review the next steps for the implementations launched in the October quarter,
- Congratulate our team members' accomplishments, and wish several of our team members congratulations as they step into retirement or the next phase of their careers.

Be on the lookout for an Outlook invitation to the session that includes the link to the session. We look forward to seeing you on December 20!

[Click Here to Join the Meeting](#)



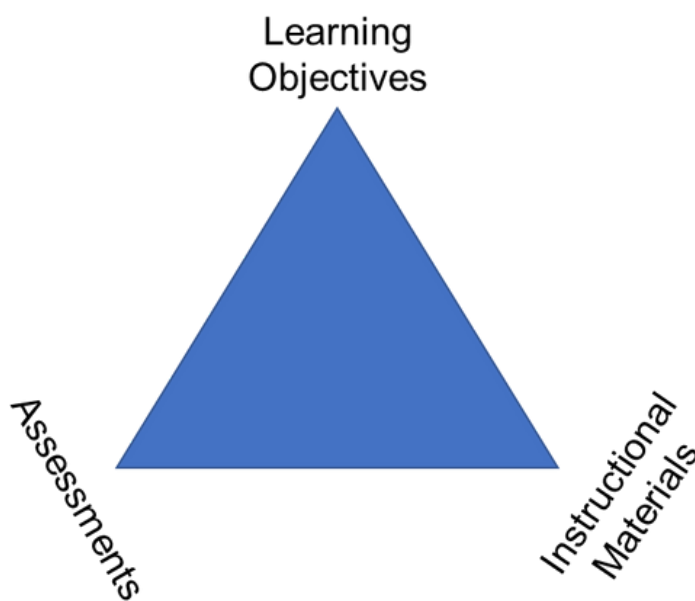
Course Alignment and Quality

by Dr. Kathy Senko

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Alignment of your course is essential for your learners to achieve desired goals. What does alignment mean? What parts of a course must be in alignment and how would you know if it is or isn't in alignment?

Alignment refers to the connection between your course learning objectives to your assessments, and your instructional materials. These components must support and reinforce one another, making direct connections for the course to be in alignment. Alignment forces organization of your course, giving it a beginning, middle and endpoint. Alignment of the course components builds purpose for the learners, identifies areas of progress and areas that need more work, validates learning, and confirms achievement of objectives.



Learning objectives clearly state the goals of the course or on a smaller level, the module. Progress towards these objectives is made through instructional materials and activities. Assessments reveal if the learner has achieved the learning objectives. If aligned all components reinforce, support, and connect to one another. Think of alignment as a kind of triangle in which the materials, activities, and assessments in your course support the learning objectives of each module, and each module in turn supports the course-level objectives. The way each part of your course supports the next is through alignment (Quality Matters, 2018).

Creating alignment starts with well-written learning objectives, supported with targeted instructional materials and activities, and concludes with assessment that verifies achievement of those objectives. Alignment happens when the elements of your course work together to support the intended learning outcomes. When you have the alignment of your course elements figured out, you will naturally have a framework for your course. "When evaluating alignment, you are looking to be sure that everything learners do is designed to support their mastery of

Course Alignment and Quality

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the learning objectives, including assessments, instructional materials, activities, and tools” (Quality Matters, 2018).

The CETL can help you thoughtfully review and ensure alignment in your course. Consider joining us for informative workshops at the January Academic Affairs event for collegial support, time and tips for reviewing course alignment.

References

CMU: Eberly Center. (2022). *Why should assessments, learning objectives, and instructional strategies be aligned?* Retrieved from Eberly Center: Teaching and Excellence in Education: <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/alignment.html#:~:text=To%20ensure%20that,students%20for%20assessments%3F>

Quality Matters. (2018). *Quality Matters Design Standards for Online and Blended Courses, sixth edition*. Maryland Online, Inc.

Learning Objectives, Alignment, and Quality

by Elizabeth DeVita

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As educators, we know it is important to identify learning objectives and that they are helpful for learners to be successful in their coursework and for us to be effective instructors. Generally, we understand that characteristics of a well-written learning objective is that it is “SMART,” i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused, and time-focused. **But how do we know that the learning objectives in our course are driving quality instruction and learner success?**



Quality Matters, a nonprofit organization that leads quality assurance initiatives uses its QM Rubric and Standards to conduct formal and informal course reviews. This rubric is an excellent guide for us to use in reviewing course quality, specifically related to alignment. Let's take a closer look at a few QM Specific Review Standards (SRS) related to learning objectives as a critical measure of quality.

Learning Objectives

Are there objectives (or competencies) at the course AND module/unit level? Do they describe what learners will be able to do upon completion of the course? Are they visible to learners as they progress through the course learning path?

- **SRS 2.1** The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.
- **SRS 2.2** The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.
- **SRS 2.3** - Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, are written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.

Assessment & Learning Objectives

Do the assessments evaluate learner progress in achieving the stated learning objectives?

- **SRS 3.1** The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.

Learning Objectives, Alignment, and Quality

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Despite knowing the importance of well-articulated learning objectives that relate to assessments, there are impediments to reviewing alignment, including time available, technical know-how and change process and coordination. Consider starting with a preliminary review of learning objectives in a course that you teach frequently. Focus on the presence of learning objectives at the course level and module level and review how well the objectives are communicated. Here are some questions to help guide your review of learning objectives and their alignment:

- Do the course learning objectives (CLOs) on your syllabus accurately reflect what you and other instructors teach in the course on a regular basis? Are they all relevant?
- Are any of the CLOs better suited as module-level learning objectives?
- Do the verbs accurately reflect the Bloom's cognitive learning level you want learners to achieve by the end of the course? By the end of the module?

Similarly, review your module-level learning objectives (MLOs). Verify that there are MLOs to support each CLO. Each MLO should map to at least one CLO.

Well-written and targeted learning objectives set the goal for learners in a course, but we only know if those goals are met if the assessments clearly align with those objectives. Take a quick inventory of assessments in your course and check for alignment.

- Does the assessment map to a specific module or course-level objective?
- Does the assessment "type," i.e., quiz, case study, project, enable a learner to demonstrate they have achieved the cognitive learning as expressed in the learning objective?

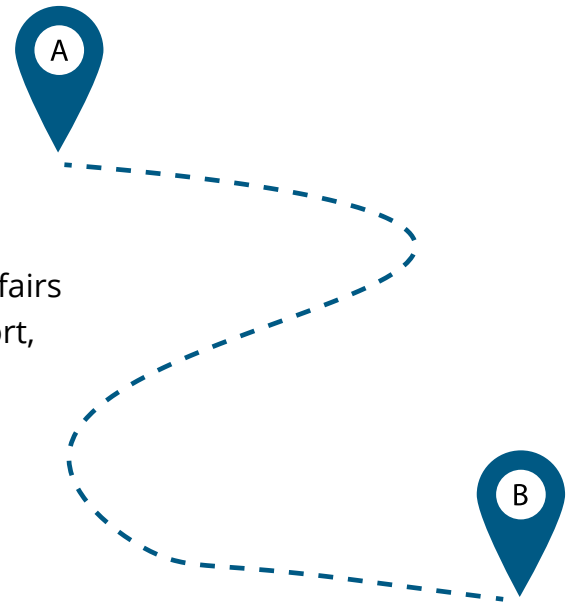
An assessment and learning objective may share a common topic, but it doesn't necessarily mean they align. The cognitive level of learning expressed in the learning objective should correlate with the type of assessment used. For example, if the objective states a learner should be able to "analyze" or "evaluate" a data set or scenario, a multiple-choice, fact-based quiz is not the most effective tool.



Learning Objectives, Alignment, and Quality

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A clear map of course-end learning objectives and supporting module objectives is important and aligning assessments with those objectives is essential to ensure quality and validate learner achievement. Consider joining CETL for a course quality and alignment workshop during the January Academic Affairs event. These workshops will provide time, collegial support, and tips for reviewing and validating course alignment, a critical element of course quality.



References

Learning Objectives and Alignment | *Digital Learning*. (n.d.). University of Washington Tacoma.
<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/digital-learning/learning-objectives-and-alignment>

Quality Matters. (2018). *Quality Matters Design Standards for Online and Blended Courses*, sixth edition. Maryland Online, Inc.

Understanding the Course NavBar in D2L

by Jessica Kos

The gray course navigation bar (navbar) is identical within each Brightspace course shell to allow faculty and students to have a consistent navigation experience in all Brightspace courses. **Understanding each category or item can help you quickly and efficiently navigate within your course.**

Course Home Content Assessments ▾ Course Tools ▾ Learner Resources ▾ DEI Resources ▾ Grades Class Progress

There are a variety of ways that users can access the course content. The **Content** item on the gray navbar will take users into the full *Table of Contents* and place you into the last folder that you visited. If you want to go back out to the course landing page to access the *homepage widgets*, click on **Course Home**.

By selecting **Assessments** from the navbar, all users can access the D2L assessment tools directly – Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, Video Assignments. These “*buckets*” house all assessments that get deep linked into the Content for context. Any unused assessments should be deleted from your section shell; reordering assignments allows for easy editing, grading, and accessing after completion. Check each “bucket” to ensure that students cannot access assessments that are obsolete, not used, or that you do not want available yet.

The **Course Tools** navbar option allows users to jump quickly to a tool page. Tools that are only applicable to instructors do not appear for students. Using the *Role Switcher: View as Learner* enables instructors to see the difference between the two roles.

We want to make sure that users have easy access to the resources and support that they might need. The links in **Learner Resources** focus on primarily on *academic-related* (APA Style Guide, eCampus, Library Access, Tutor.com) and *PTC technology-related* (Brightspace help, Current Student Logins, PTC Helpdesk) support. Links to the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, EthicPoint, and WeAreListening are available in **DEI Resources** for all users.

The last two items on the course navbar are tools used to track grades and student progress. These two items are available to all users to note and track class progress. **Grades** collects and consolidates data from the Assessments tools when properly linked. Look for the Grades “key” from within the Assessment buckets to verify each item is linked to the Grades tool. From Grades > Manage Grades, you can double check that the Max. Points is correct for each assessment. The **Class Progress** tool helps track overall course progress and includes a variety of progress indicators.

From PTC's Health & Wellness Center: Is a Content and/or Trigger Warning Needed in Your Course?

by Dr. Stephanie Svilar

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Over the past few years, the concept of content and trigger warnings for course materials has caused serious debates in higher academia. While some leaders are in favor of providing a space where students can be themselves without criticism or judgment, and approve of providing content and trigger warnings for potentially sensitive subject matter, others argue that creating safe spaces can stifle classroom debate and prevent students from grappling with difficult concepts.

Counselors, like myself, may have a different viewpoint from other academic leaders regarding trigger warnings, as counselors directly serve students and help them to address their mental health needs. In fact, trigger warnings and safe spaces may serve a functional purpose in today's college campuses, and the pushback may stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of trigger warnings.

Addressing the concerns of students who may be negatively affected by sensitive material does not mean that colleges need to limit the discussion of potentially triggering topics, such as rape, murder, war, abuse, racism, eating disorders or alcohol. Instead, a content or trigger warning should function in exactly the way it is defined: a warning to students who may need time to prepare (mentally, physically or otherwise) so that they can best engage with challenging and sensitive course material in a controlled setting, rather than being blindsided in a public space with their fellow classmates.

In 2021, through the prompting of a concerned student, the Provost's Office at the University of Connecticut formed a multidisciplinary task force to determine the need to use content and trigger warnings in their classrooms. They note that the following types of content: sexual violence, racial violence, familial violence, racial slurs, and other examples of overt racism, eating disorders, and suicide are examples of content that may be upsetting or triggering, but also note that the list is clearly not exhaustive. I offer these definitions that are adapted from the task force:

Content Warning: a stated warning (shared verbally and/or in writing) that the curriculum of a course may contain content that could be sensitive or challenging for some students in that it may upset or offend them.

From PTC's Health & Wellness Center: Is a Content and/or Trigger Warning Needed in Your Course?

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Trigger Warning: a stated warning (shared verbally and/or in writing) that the curriculum of a course may contain materials and supplemental aids (videos, activities, etc.) that could be sensitive or challenging for some students in that it may elicit a strong emotional reaction.

You'll notice that the two definitions are very similar and, as such, are often used interchangeably.

The task force notes that the best practice for the use of content and/or trigger warnings is to present them in writing in the course syllabus while also presenting them verbally as needed in class. The task force explains that this practice supports a safe, inclusive, and engaged learning environment. I offer these templates for written warnings that are adapted from the task force:



Content Warning

- I acknowledge that each of you comes to PTC with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive course information and materials. In this class, the curriculum and all associated content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. If you encounter a topic that is challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to talk to me or another trusted adult. Additionally, you may reach out to Dr. Svilar, PTC's Dean of Counseling & Student Development at 412-809-5341 or Svilar.Stephanie@ptcollege.edu. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning

- I acknowledge that each of you comes to PTC with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive course information and materials. In this class, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. If you encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include stepping out of class for 5-10 minutes to use a coping skill while the topic is discussed. Should you need more support, I encourage you to reach out to Dr. Svilar, PTC's Dean of Counseling & Student Development at 412-809-5341 or Svilar.Stephanie@ptcollege.edu. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material. Class topics are discussed for the

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sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

PTC does not have a policy regarding the use of content and/or trigger warnings. And they may not be appropriate for every course. But I do encourage you to think about your course curriculum, content, and materials to see if perhaps using one or both of these warnings could foster an even more safe, inclusive, and engaged learning environment in your classrooms.



Announcements

Important Dates

DECEMBER 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Jingle Mingle	15	16	17
18	19	20 Academic Affairs Town Hall	21 Last Day of Fall Quarter	22	23 First Day Winter Holiday Break	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Winter Holiday Break						

JANUARY 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Last Day Winter Holiday Break	3 Fall Quarter Grades Due	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 Martin Luther King, Jr Day	All Academic Affairs Week				21
22	23	24 First Day of Winter Quarter	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- [Innovative Educators](#) - this site offers a variety of free workshops in several topic areas including online learning, leadership and retention.
- [Get Educated](#) - offers 10 free training courses for those teaching online.
- [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) - offers various virtual events on a variety of topics.
- [Magna Publishing](#) - offers different workshops every month on a variety of topics.
- [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#) - offers links to past recorded webinars on various topics.