## Sarah Anderegg

**From:** Jonathan Eldridge
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 3:36 PM
**To:** Jonathan Eldridge
**Subject:** Spring 2023 Faculty Information & Updates, Volume XIX
**Attachments:** CoCreating Course Policies.pdf; A little outreach goes a long way.pdf; End-of-Semester-Returns-Poster-FPO.pdf

Dear College of Marin Faculty:

This is it! The last volume of information and updates for Spring 2023. This week's articles are meant to help you as you think ahead to how you want to organize your Fall 2023 classes and what you can do ahead of time to have an intentional plan to help all students succeed—as one of the articles notes, a little outreach really does go a long way.

I look forward to seeing you at Commencement on Friday—and at the pre-function ahead of it at 4p.m. in the Diamond PE Building. If you have not RSVP'd, there's still time!

A couple of items to be aware of and share with students as you wrap up final exams this week:

**Food Access**
The College of Marin Wednesday food distribution is complete and will be close for the summer months. We will continue back up the first week of classes. In the meantime, please refer students to the SF/Marin Food Bank food locator to find pantries and healthy foods near them. https://www.sfmfoodbank.org/find-food/
If students have questions or need support, please have them submit a COM Care report.

**Technology**
All students must return their devices to the Library, or renew them at the end of term. Please review the attached guide to helps students navigate the process.

Thank you for all you have done this semester and this academic year and for making College of Marin the special place it is.

Jonathan

**Jonathan Eldridge, Ed.D**
*Assistant Superintendent/*
*Vice President of Student Learning & Success*
College of Marin
Office: 415-485-9618
jeldridge@marin.edu

# DEVOLUCIÓN DE FINAL DE SEMESTRE

**Todos los materiales se deben devolver antes del viernes 26 de mayo, 2023**

## LIBROS RENTADOS

### Tienda del Campus

120 Kent Avenue
Campus de Kentfield
(cerca del estacionamiento 1)

Lun – Jue 9 m a 4 pm
Vier 9 am a 1 pm

## MATERIALES DE BIBILIOTECA

### Gotas de Libros

Fusselman Hall y
Estacionamiento 6
Campus de Kentfield

Abierto 24/7

## DISPOSITIVOS TECNOLÓGICOS

Laptops y/o
Hotspots

### ¿Sigues en COM?

Si te matriculaste para el verano por favor envía tu email, tu nombre y M00# aLibraryCirc@marin.edu.

### ¿Te vas de COM?

Devuelve tu(s) dispositivo(s)
en la recepción de
Fusselman Hall
Campus de Kentfield

Lun – Jue 8 am to 8 pm
Vier 8 am to 2 pm

Mayo 6, 13, 20
12 pm a 5 pm

**IMPORTANTE**

Por favor no pongas laptops o Hotspots de Wi-Fi en el depósito de libros de la biblioteca, porque se pueden dañar. Los estudiantes son responsables por laptops perdidas, robadas o dañadas y se les cobrará hasta $400 por la reparación o el reemplazo de una laptop y $50 por un Wi-Fi Hotspot.

COLLEGE OF MARIN

**MAPA DEL CAMPUS DE KENTFIELD**
campuses.marin.edu/campus-maps

# END OF SEMESTER RETURNS

**All materials are due by Friday, May 26, 2023**

## TEXT BOOK RENTALS

### Campus Store

120 Kent Avenue
Kentfield Campus
(Near Parking Lot 1)

M–Th 9 am to 4 pm
F 9 am to 1 pm

## LIBRARY MATERIALS

### Book Drops

Fusselman Hall
and Parking Lot 6
Kentfield Campus

Open 24/7

## TECHNOLOGY DEVICES

Laptops and/or Hotspots

### Continuing at COM?

If you have enrolled for summer, please email your name and M00# to LibraryCirc@marin.edu.

### Leaving COM?

Return your device(s) to the front desk in Fusselman Hall, Kentfield Campus

M–Th 8 am to 8 pm
F 8 am to 2 pm

May 6, 13, 20
12 pm to 5 pm

**IMPORTANT**

Please do not put laptops or Wi-Fi Hotspots in the library book drops, as items may become damaged. Students are responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged laptops and will be charged repair or replacement costs of up to $400 for laptops and $50 for Wi-Fi Hotspots.

COLLEGE OF MARIN

**KENTFIELD CAMPUS MAP**

campuses.marin.edu/campus-maps

## Co-Designed Course Policies

In early January, a Twitter thread by Johnathan Flowers, an assistant professor of philosophy at California State University at Northridge, caught my eye. “I have a really radical idea,” it began. “What if I walked into the first class of the semester and had the students co-design absence, attendance, participation, and late-work policies for the semester?” Flowers’s thread, which went on to describe how such co-creation could give students both agency and accountability, kicked off a ton of discussion.

The idea is hardly new. For Flowers, it’s a natural outgrowth of his interest in contract grading and ungrading, and in the work of thinkers like Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and Audre Lorde. He also sees a link to the Buddhist idea of *hoben,* using “skillful means” to lead people forward in their understanding. Still, he called the suggestion “radical” for a reason. College students aren’t typically invited to help set course policies, and plenty of people regard an education as something you’re given, not something you engage in.

Some professors who replied to Flowers’s tweets applauded the idea or said they follow it in their classes. Others said they’d tried it but it hadn’t worked well. Some instructors worried especially about how co-designing course policies would affect students with disabilities — something Flowers, who has ADHD, had considered. The idea isn’t to let students create any policy they can dream up, he underscored in a recent interview. “The structure was designed together with students, so that I could hear what worked best for them,” he said.

“Once we sat down together and figured out what the structure was going to be,” he continued, “my responsibility then became to hold students to that structure.”

I imagine Flowers’s thread caught on in part because so many instructors are struggling with attendance and participation right now — and because of the strong differences of opinion, on campus and beyond it, about what today’s students are like, and what they need.

I also wondered whether Flowers had ended up co-creating the policies in his own courses this semester. Yes, he told me, though he couldn’t start the discussion with a blank slate. His university requires professors to make course syllabi available in advance, so Flowers used his existing policies as the starting point.

How did it go? The discussion wasn’t as robust as Flowers might have hoped, he said, for a few reasons. His courses are designed to be inclusive, and already had built-in flexibility, with policies like an automatic 72-hour grace period after assignments were due. If the course policies were more traditional, he figured, students would have requested more adjustments.

But also, Flowers noted, most students just weren’t prepared to have this kind of discussion. They’d never been invited to before. Many seemed unsure of what sort of policies they could propose, and a few floated wild ideas, like not having any assignments.

What, Flowers asked, would a course with no assignments look like? It would just be a discussion, the students said. Then it would be crucial to do all of the reading in advance of each class, the professor said. Some of the students chuckled. Maybe having assignments wouldn’t be so bad after all.

Given all the trouble getting students to follow course policies, perhaps pushing them to really think about why they’re there is a good first step.

Beckie Supiano writes about teaching, learning, and the human interactions that shape them.

# A little outreach goes a long way

Professors play a key role in students' paths through college. But connecting with students and providing them with useful feedback is a big challenge for professors teaching very large classes.

A new paper offers some encouraging evidence that low-touch forms of outreach from an instructor can make a difference in how students, especially those from marginalized groups, view the course — and help improve their academic performance.

The authors of the paper, Scott E. Carrell and Michal Kurlaender, both professors at the University of California at Davis, wanted to find ways to better support a specific student population: Black and Latino men, groups that tend to graduate at lower rates than their peers. The researchers began by conducting focus groups of such students in their first year at a regional public university to learn more about their college experiences and what would help them improve.

Two themes emerged: Students reported having little connection with their professors — especially in contrast with the relationships they had with teachers in high school — and students were not sure what actions to take to improve how they did in their courses.

Armed with this insight, as well as literature from behavioral economics and social psychology, the researchers decided to test whether having instructors send light-touch, personalized emails to students in their courses could move the needle on student performance in general, and for male students of color in particular. After a successful pilot experiment at a different university, they scaled it up at the same regional public university where the focus groups took place. This phase of the research included 22 instructors teaching large classes, and nearly 3,000 students.

The researchers thought that it was important that the messages came from students' instructors, so they varied by course. The experiment just stipulated that the messages had to be personalized and give feedback on how students could improve their performance in a course and/or access additional support.

The emails had a positive, but statistically insignificant, impact on the full student population. But for underrepresented minority students — the group they especially hoped to help — the results were stronger: They were 4.9 percentage points more likely to get an A or B in the course. Not only that, but the researchers found the emails had a "spillover" effect. Students who got them performed better in other courses, too. And that stronger performance lasted for several semesters.

What accounts for these results? Was it the helpful information about how to succeed in the course or that a professor reached out? Probably both, Kurlaender says. The researchers asked students about their impressions of their professor and the course; those who got the emails were more favorable. "We have some evidence of the mechanisms being about connectedness and belonging," Kurlaender said in an interview. "But I also believe students need information."

There's a lot more to learn about what made the emails effective, Kurlaender says — and how they could be more so. Future work could test adjustments to the language and frequency of the messages, among other things.

For professors who already send similar messages, the results of the experiment are probably encouraging. For anyone interested in trying it out, Kurlaender suggests looking first at who and what they're teaching and picking a group of students to start with. It's important not to single out students, based on their identities, to receive such messages, she points out, since that might suggest to students that the instructor expects them to struggle based on that characteristic. The idea is to target, say, students getting a B in a difficult course to encourage them to stick with a major, or those getting a C who are likely to do well if they follow a set of suggestions, and see if more guidance helps them succeed.

From there, messages can be adjusted — and expanded — as fits the needs of the class.

Do you send similar messages to your students? Have you seen it make a difference in their relationships with you? In their performance in your course? Share your experience with me at beckie.supiano@chronicle.com, and it may be included in a future issue of the newsletter.

**Who's it from?**

I've long been interested in informational nudges meant to help students. I wrote about a number of these efforts back when I covered admissions and financial aid. But, as I reported in a *Chronicle* article, some promising early studies did not garner the expected results at scale, calling the benefits of this kind of approach into question.

As I reread my article, which also describes problems replicating some of the social-psychology interventions meant to support academic success, I realized one piece of it is encouraging when it comes to professors emailing students: The evidence suggests that one driver of whether low-touch nudges are effective is who they're from. In my story, I contrast the results of an effort, conducted by College Board, to encourage low-income students to apply to selective colleges and a more-promising effort built on the same premise where Michigan residents received messages from the University of Michigan.

"As for reminder-style nudges, there's emerging consensus that the context is really important. It seems to matter a lot, for instance, who's doing the nudging," I wrote.

It stands to reason that an email from their professor would matter more to students than one from a stranger or some faceless campus office.

Indeed, the study above describes students' gratitude for the emails — and professors I've spoken with who send similar messages have heard similar feedback from their students. Students said those emails mattered. The reason, though, is pretty demoralizing: They were pleasantly surprised to hear from professors, because they usually don't.

Beckie Supiano writes about teaching, learning, and the human interactions that shape them.