

Preface

Pivots, Pandemics, and Professional Development

I have been so privileged to teach English courses for many years, and, in some years, in conditions similar to the challenges we face now. In Louisiana, Hurricane Katrina dislocated thousands of students and reduced the financial support institutions received at the same time.

Even before that disruption, the systemic competition for limited resources in Louisiana clearly signaled to active, creative departments that alternative ways to fund good ideas must be regularly sought. I learned there as a professor and administrator that pressures of circumstances can lead to better teaching, programs, and student success.

The conditions we face now challenge us to think and act in new ways, and the future is rich with good possibilities for greater inclusion and collaboration, for smarter engagement with each other and our students, and for the benefits of a full analysis of all that we as faculty do. The changes that result can truly be steps forward.

The shift from enthusiastic telling from the lectern to immersion in collaboration of small groups is a good example of the kind of pivot in pedagogy that works so much better for students. The sage on the stage as a central metaphor for teaching in years past has given way to the player-coach, or guide. Now students even in their first years can learn more directly and independently, with the support of the expert with advanced degrees.

These are simultaneously the best and worst of times, and when things settle down into a new routine in a year or two or three, I anticipate that several good pivots in faculty development will have emerged from this pandemic.

These essays in Volume 2 of *Engaged Student Learning* represent the best thinking that foretells more good things to come.

Sincerely,



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