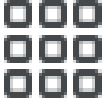# Start of Semester Brightspace Checklist

☐ If your Summer/Fall semester courses aren't showing up in "My Courses," click on the grid button in Brightspace and type "202350" for summer or "202370" for fall into the search bar. Click the pushpin icon next to each 2023 course, and unpin any old courses that you no longer want pinned in "My Courses." If you notice any discrepancies in the Summer/Fall courses you have access to, check with your Chair right away.

☐ If you're teaching multiple sections of the same course, you can ask Brittany or Jason to merge sections, or to rename sections for you. If merging sections, don't do anything else with the courses until the merge process is complete.

☐ Copy material from a previous course into your new semester course. In the new course click "*Edit Course*," then "*Import/Export/Copy Components*," or ask Brittany or Jason for assistance.

☐ Update your course syllabus, upload it to the Content area, and delete the old syllabus. Go to the "Edit Course" tab and select "Manage Dates." Update or add due dates, start dates and end dates in the following areas:

☐ Assignments   ☐ Announcements

☐ Quizzes   ☐ Discussions

☐ Double-check any links to external videos or other resources to make sure they still work. Fix or replace any broken links. Click on your Brightspace profile name and click "*View as Student*" to see the course as a student would see it.

☐ Delete old or outdated Announcements, and create update "Welcome" and/or "Getting Started" News items.

☐ Courses are open to students starting **May 8** (summer first session) **or August 13** (fall), one week before the official start of class. You should try to at least have a welcome message and syllabus visible to students by then, as some students will start looking at their courses as soon as they open.

☐ Consider recording a short video introduction, especially for online-only courses. Talk about yourself, the objectives and structure of the course, and any other critical information that students should know going into the class. [ScreenPal](#) formerly Screencast-o-matic.com is an easy-to-use recording tool, and OTLE can loan you a webcam and offer some technical assistance.

☐ If you are using a textbook that uses LTI (publisher integrations into Brightspace), please let OTLE know asap

☐ Talk to ITS if you have any special computer lab or classroom needs that need to be addressed before the semester starts. Make sure any required software is up to date and working. Try out any needed projectors, computers, or other hardware before the first week of class, and email helpdesk@msun.edu to report any problems.

☐ This is also a good time to backup your electronic media. If you have a lot of critical files on your computer, you should make copies on external hard drives, thumb drives, or cloud backup services like OneDrive or Google Drive.

Ideas for a successful first day of class

Set expectations – collaboratively rather than "preachily"
- Have students help you set expectations by co-defining things like "good course participation," "good writing practices," "good netiquette," "courteous behavior," etc.
- Have the class work in groups to come up with arguments and then debate for a conduct-related question (e.g., Should cellphones be allowed in this class? Should points be taken off for safety infractions?)
- Have students work in groups to come up with 3 things instructors do to make it easy to learn and 3 things they do to make it hard to learn. Have them write answers on the board. Then share with them a few things that students do to make it hard to teach.
- Work collaboratively with students to share and discuss good learning strategies for your content area (flashcards, study groups, peer text chats, etc.)

Hook them on course content
- Use an exciting fact, a story, an interesting video, a case study, a provoking question — anything that gives them a taste of your course's content, establishes relevance, and promotes intrigue.
- Better yet, couple the opening hook with an activity that gets students thinking about or working on a problem or puzzle right away.

Survey or pre-assess
- Try a "common sense inventory." Give students 15 statements related to course content and have them work with a neighbor to determine which are true and which are false (e.g., in a social psychology course, "Suicide is more likely among women than men," or "Over half of all marriages occur between persons who live within 20 blocks of each other"). Reveal the right answer. Physics and other courses where students may have a lot of misconceptions are ideal for this exercise.[1]
- Distribute index cards and ask the students to write down their name, hometown, major, a hobby, and a couple of sentences about why they are taking this course. This will give you a sense of your students' interests and expectations.

Build community
- "Ice breakers" can help set a good class dynamic, but they can also be cringeworthy. Try an activity that is discipline-specific. If you are teaching customer service, you might have them jot down their worst and best customer service experiences and share them with their neighbors and the class. The lesson might be that bad experiences are more memorable than good ones, underlining the importance of the course's subject matter.

Ideas for your first assignment

"Homework Zero"
- Give students a brief assignment that checks that they've read the syllabus, rather than reading through every word on the first day of class.
- Hang a list of student names inside your door and tell them that their first assignment is to stop by during one of your office hours during the first two weeks of class and say hello (this makes it more likely that they'll come find you if they ever need help).

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[1] https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/firstday.html