



SI-43

### Something Has to Give

With traditional time-limited courses, the tendency to see relentless content expansion must be considered when planning a course of study. In other words, something has to give when, year after year, instructors try to stuff more and more content in the same-sized course bag.

There are two common solutions to this problem; you can drop an equal amount of old content necessary to make room for the new content. Or, the pace of teaching and learning must be accelerated in order to complete the instructional process before the final bell rings. If you notice yourself rushing to complete the course, this might mean the course suffers from content overload, or you need to employ accelerated teaching methods.

#### Zero-base It

However, a better solution to deal with content expansion is to zero-base the course content each time you teach it. By rating each unit and topic according to its importance, unnecessary and outdated content can be eliminated.

Ruthlessly analyze everything to identify what you can safely discard and what must be kept. Then, replace old subjects with new ones. When material is replaced instead of added, it's possible to maintain a pace of teaching and learning that will allow course outcomes to be realized.

#### Choke Point Elimination

A second and parallel tactic is to find the choke points in your course. If you have taught a course repeatedly, you probably know exactly where learning slows and levels of confusion arise. By devising a new teaching path or process

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through these choke points, it's possible to reclaim learning time to allow new material to be added. You just have to be willing to try new approaches and observe the results.

If you don't know what you could do differently, ask a colleague, read materials on accelerated learning, and if your college or university is a Teaching For Success member, search for instructional tips using the comprehensive TFS Solutionary.

For example, if I wanted to accelerate learning in my class, and initiated a search in the TFS Solutionary using "learning" and a search term, I would immediately find:

- "How to Evaluate Group Learning Activities." p. 8
- "How to Assess Laboratory Learning," p. 11
- "Seven Steps to Service Learning Marketing." p. 34

These are just a few of the scores of "learning" articles you will find in The TFS Solutionary. If you believe there is a better, faster way to teach a tough course section, you will find it. Improvement requires time and effort, but the payoff is that you can update and add content to your course without sacrificing retention or depth of learning.

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