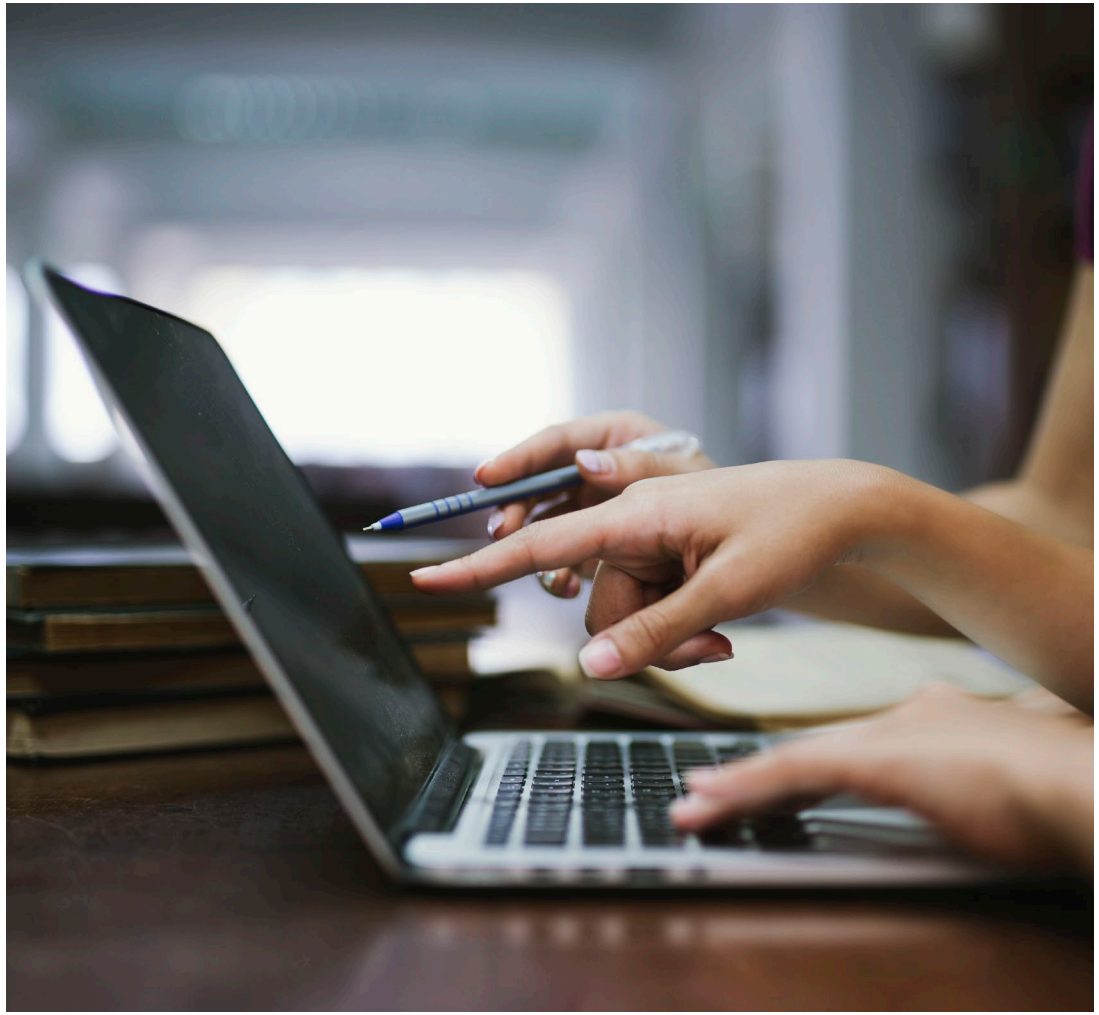
TEACHING EFFECTIVELY: INCREASING CLASS SIZES

BRING YOUR OWN CHAIR AND SOME USEFUL STRATEGIES

A SPARKSHOP BROUGHT TO YOU BY
YOUR OTEI FRIENDS
MIGUEL PÉREZ MONTORO

By the end of this session, we will have:

- Discussed research-based challenges of large class sizes
- Explored practical strategies to promote student engagement
- Identified strategies to consider during the course design phase
- Learned **we are not alone.**

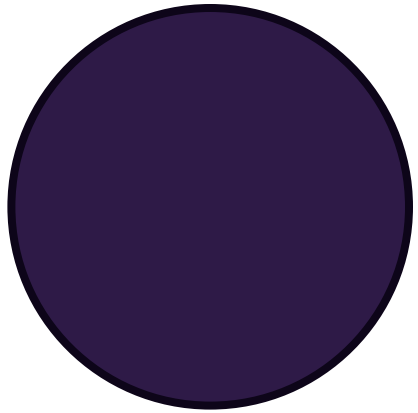


LET'S TALK CHALLENGES

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CLASS SIZES INCREASE?

Challenges and Issues of Larger Classes

What are **challenges** you have found (or are finding) teaching in larger classrooms?



Challenges and Issues of Larger Classes

1. Limited opportunities for **individual student participation.**
2. Difficulty in **monitoring student understanding** in real time (formative assessment).
3. Increased risk of **student disengagement and distraction** (e.g., texting, shopping).
4. Challenges with **classroom management** and maintaining attention across a large space.
5. **Reduced interaction** between students and instructor, making it harder to build rapport.
6. **Accessibility issues** (visibility of slides, audibility, physical space constraints).
7. **Assessment and feedback** become more time-consuming and less personalized.
8. Risk of students feeling **anonymous or disconnected** from the learning community.

PROMOTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

Increasing Engagement in Large Classes

What are ways in which you boost **engagement** in your larger classes?

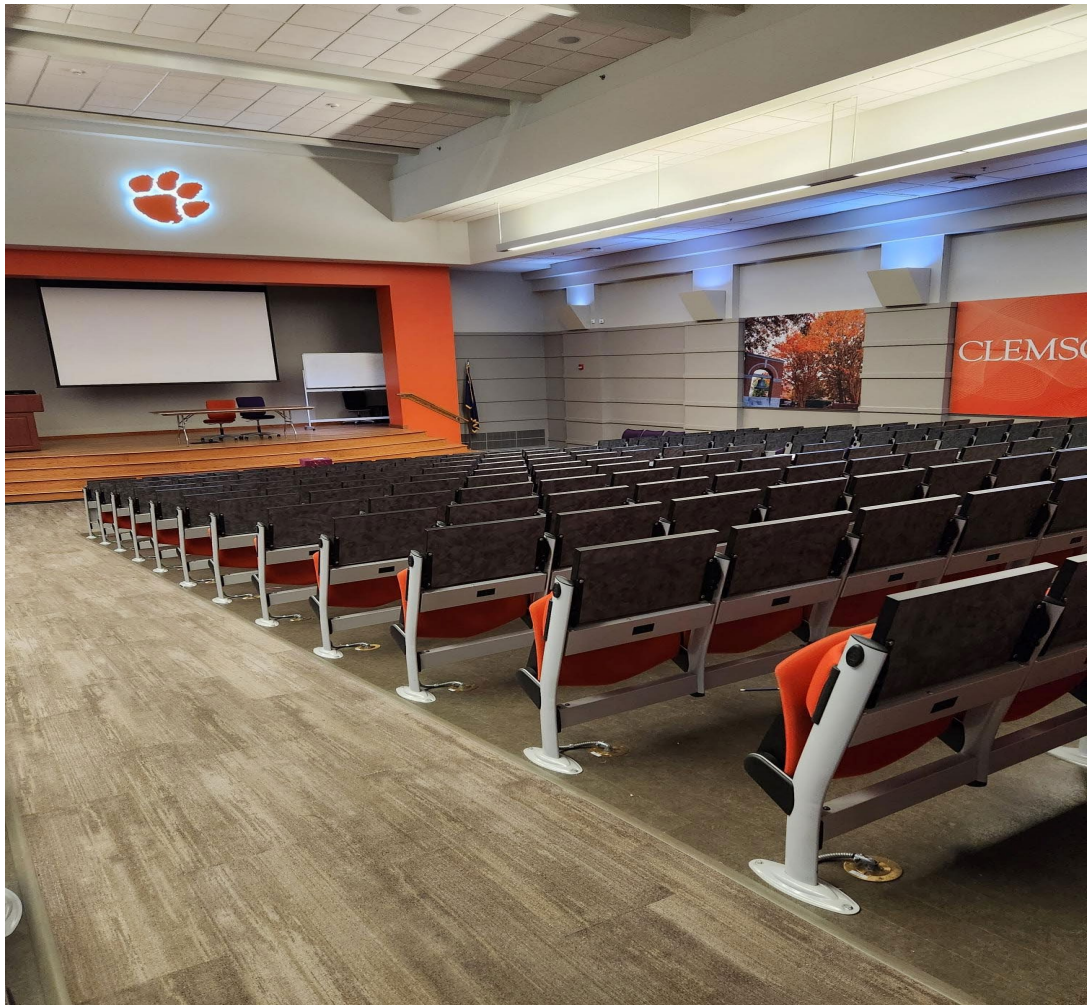
Increasing Engagement in Large Classes

1. Use of **active learning techniques** (think-pair-share, clicker questions, polls).
2. **Frequent low-stakes assessments** to check understanding and keep students accountable.
3. **Interactive questioning strategies** (cold calling, warm calling, or random selection).
4. Incorporating **multimedia and real-world examples** to sustain attention.
5. **Movement and proximity**—instructor or TAs circulating to re-engage students at the back.
6. **Structured group work** within large lectures (pods, breakout discussions).
7. Embedding **formative feedback loops** (quick reflections, minute papers, peer feedback).
8. **Variety in instructional methods** to reset attention spans (lecture, activity, video, discussion).

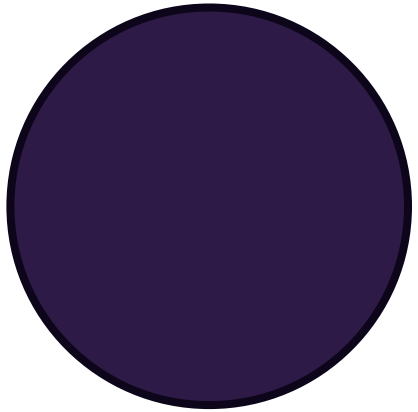
PREPARING COURSES FOR LARGER GROUPS

PLANNING FOR A SMOOTH SEMESTER

Pedagogical Decisions and Course Design for Large Classes



How is the **design** of your larger courses different from the smaller ones?



Pedagogical Decisions and Course Design for Large Classes

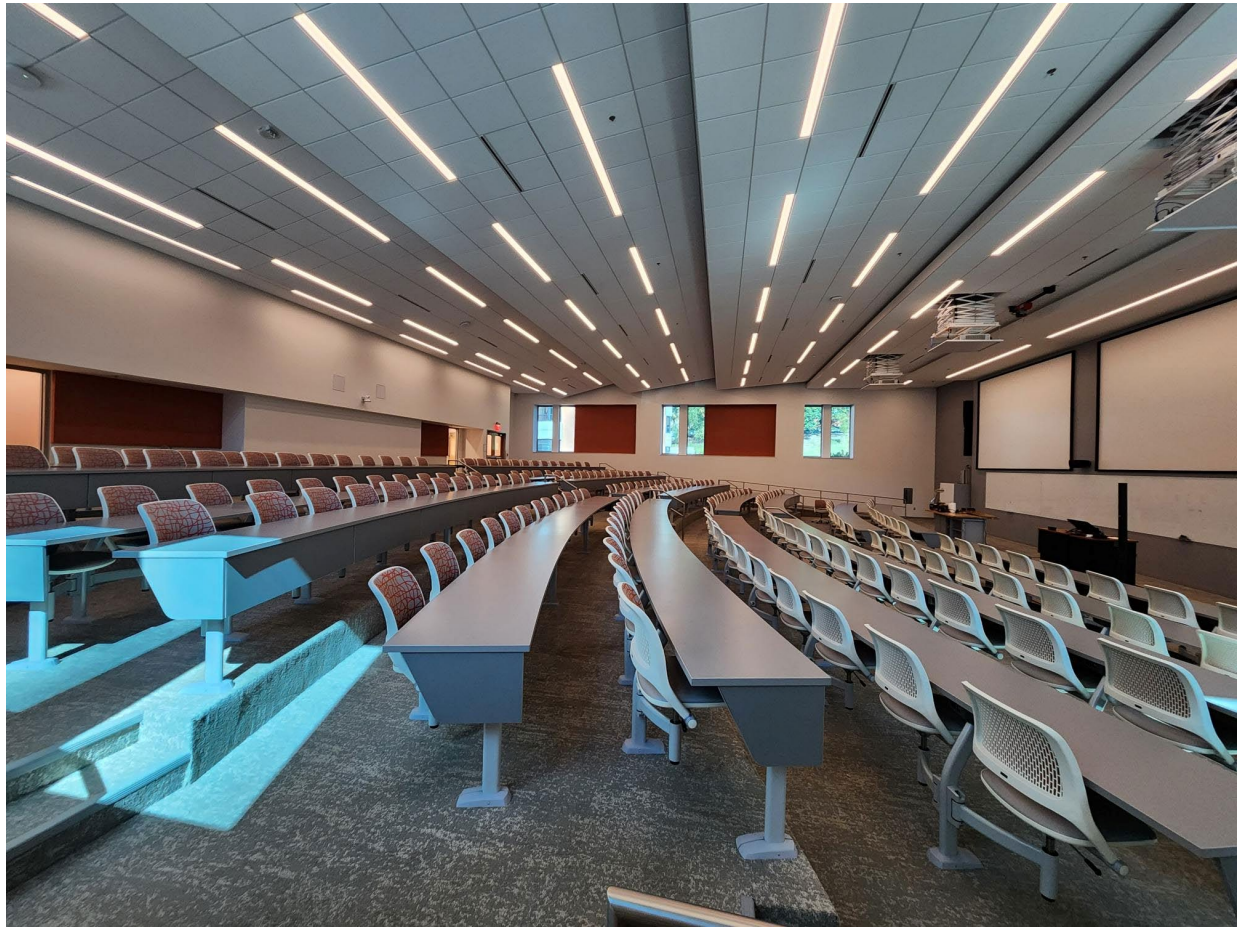
1. **Clear learning objectives** and transparent alignment with assessments.
2. **Chunking content** into shorter segments to avoid cognitive overload.
3. Designing slides and visuals with **large fonts and minimal clutter** for readability.
4. **Scaffolding activities** so students can build from simple to complex tasks.
5. Incorporating **technology tools** (Canvas quizzes, polling apps, collaborative platforms).
6. **Intentional pacing** with planned pauses for reflection or peer discussion.
7. Building in **equitable participation structures** so all students have a voice.
8. Designing assessments that are **scalable** (auto-graded quizzes, rubrics for consistency).

UNDERSTANDING WE ARE NOT ALONE

FINDING THE RIGHT RESOURCES

Institutional Support Available

What **resources** have you used to help you in designing and teaching highly attended courses?



Institutional Support Available

1. **Teaching and learning centers (OTEI)** offer consultations, workshops, and observation feedback.
2. **Technology support** (polling technologies, recorded lectures, Canvas integration).
3. **Graduate assistants or teaching assistants** to help with facilitation, grading, and monitoring engagement (GRAD 360°).
4. **Instructional design support** for course redesign and active learning integration.
5. **Accessibility services** to ensure materials are usable for all students.
6. **Peer observation programs** or faculty learning communities for sharing strategies.
7. **Academic Success Center** (Peer-Assisted Learning program, tutoring).

Resources

Peer Observation Training (OTEI):

- Link to Peer Observation of Teaching Canvas Course

Polling software:

- Link to Western Washington University's ABCD Cards App Site

Graduate Student Training (GRAD 360°):

- Link to GRAD 360°'s Website

Academic Success Center's Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) Program:

- Link to PAL Resources

Clemson's Digital Acccessibility Guides and Contact:

- Link to Clemson's Digital Accessibility Website

Key Takeaways – Teaching Increasingly Large Classes

- The challenges you will face will be **specific, but not unique.**
- The hardest part will be **compromising aspects of your current instruction**, rather than implementing new strategies.
- **You are not alone** in your teaching efforts. When in doubt about how to adjust a course or class for larger groups:
  - Contact a faculty support unit, or
  - Contact another instructor who teaches groups of a similar size.

REFERENCES

USED TO INFORM THIS SPARKSHOP

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