Tips for Designing Effective Writing Assignments

Below is a list of common practices to improve assignment readability and clarity. When creating new or refining old assignments, keep these practices in mind:

- Try to be as clear and specific in your description as you can. Ask a colleague to review assignment descriptions for clarity.

- Consider delivering a presentation during class time to explain and review major writing assignments.

- Think about the implications of particular words in your description. What would you like your students to do-discuss, analyze, summarize material?

- When possible, offer a variety of topics and ways to complete the assignment. This kind of variety may allow students to draw on their own strengths, interests, and learning styles.

- Identify the audience(s) for an assignment. Students might perform better if they know who they are writing to. Audience awareness is important for real-world application.

- Identify the persona you want students to adopt in writing. Students have to learn the voice, tone, and style that is used in your discipline.

- Identify what kinds of products students are writing. For example, grant proposal, progress report, yearly evaluations, documenting research processes, etc.

Check out these links for more information:

Carnegie Mellon University
https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/writing/designassignments.html

The WAC Clearinghouse
https://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop2i.cfm

Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership
http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/tlr/teaching_resources/writing_resources/5Tips.shtml

University of Minnesota
http://writing.umn.edu/tww/assignments/designing.html