

Bonni: [00:00:00] Today on episode 110 of Teaching in Higher Ed, Robert Talbert talks about self-regulated learning and the flipped classroom.

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Bonni: [00:00:21] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I am Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:48] I'm thrilled today to be welcoming to the show Dr. Robert Talbert. He is an associate professor and the mathematics department at Grand Valley State University of Michigan and he teaches courses mainly for computer scientists discrete structures linear algebra cryptography. And he also teaches his department's online calculus course in the summer. Robert welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Robert: [00:01:16] Thanks. Thanks for having me on.

Bonni: [00:01:17] We're going to start out this episode with something a little bit personal. Tell me about how you view your role as a dad and how that connects with you. Looking at the profession of teaching.

Robert: [00:01:31] Well I'm really glad you asked that question. My view about teaching changed completely when I surveyed kids 12 years ago and I've been teaching for seven or eight years already and you know bringing up my three kids there 7 10 and 12 now and when they were babies my oldest two were adopted and so they came with some special needs and my youngest is surprise my biological baby so he started off as an infant.

Robert: [00:01:55] And I didn't really see what human really looks like through their eyes and kind of in this sort of a now and not yet aspect of parenting I found out. There is the now there was what the immediate needs you have to take care of when you're a dad. But there's also this long view that you have to take a eventually.

Robert: [00:02:14] You know my son here was just a baby. You know he's going to change diapers and stuff like that. Eventually he's going to have to be able to see himself. Eventually he's going to have to go to the bathroom by himself. Speak a language, walk, ride a bicycle, go to school that kind of thing every single day. You know I realize I have to kind of be working all those things at the same time but what's happening now and what's coming in the future.

Robert: [00:02:39] And you know I mean very clearly it crept up on my teaching too because all of my students or children mean they're adults are 18 years olds or very young adults adults you know four or five years time are going to be all around are going to be trying to get careers and training and stuff like that and you know golly I mean my job is not just a straight shot into them but to train them to be productive and gracious and caring loving human beings who can make a difference in the world.

Robert: [00:03:07] To what extent am I doing that in the classroom? I kind of began to realize that that sort of forward looking progress for students is way more work than the actual mathematics that I am teaching. They may or may not use calculus or algebra but there will absolutely be a position to help people or to make a difference to not only teaching a calculus or algebra.

Robert: [00:03:30] I also have to get them ready for what's coming in the future just to be looking a vital human being. I kind of view the world to be very similar to each other although the audiences obviously are not exactly the same. There's roles for families that don't apply to student. But looking towards the future for the students as well I think that's what informs a great deal of my pedagogy these days.

Bonni: [00:03:52] I was telling you over slack that my four and a half year old son now knows more about space than I do. And it may have sounded like I was exaggerating but I was not. And it's one of those things though when I think about how our children might change our approach to teaching is just this complete different lens that I can put on.

Bonni: [00:04:13] I can still be a teacher about space for him even though he literally knows more than I do because there's all these different resources that I might expose him to when we think about books that we might check out from the library or we think about movies we might go to see or walk's that we take at night.

Bonni: [00:04:34] It just allows me to put on a lens where I don't have to know everything there is to provide some sort of the role of teaching for him. Did any of that come up for you as you. Parenthood more and then thought about that in relation to your teaching.

Robert: [00:04:49] Oh absolutely. Especially these days when I was 12 that she's in school right now so she's taking some courses. She's getting to the point her school and some courses. I really struggle like taking chemistry for example I was never good chemistry. I wish I wish I knew. I probably if I went to it now I would be better than when I was in high school.

Robert: [00:05:07] She's got more knowledge about chemistry than I do. But I know a little bit more about just how to learn than she does because she's still a real novice to books. And so I kind of feel like when she said she doesn't want a homework and she brings home things to do. You know my job is to coach to guide, to give her some tips and tricks to teach her how to recognize what's going on in her brain with her emotions with her physical space with her use of time. You know I would think you know I get a lot for a chemistry chemistry as a result. I'm sure you learn a lot more about space that you never have before.

Bonni: [00:05:40] I think for you and me there's just this natural curiosity that has stayed with us and many people would call about lifelong learning but I know that you use a different term in many many experts in education use a different term called self regulated learning what can you tell me about that.

Robert: [00:05:58] Sure it's a self-regulated learning is a process of learning where students are are taking initiative to monitor what they're doing and making changes when necessary. And it involves certain kinds of knowledge all working in concert with each other.

Robert: [00:06:11] One of those kinds of knowledge is strategic knowledge which is knowledge about the strategies do you have for learning, what works well when you're studying for example, how you monitor your behavior you know like when you're in high school and you often figure these things on your own but sometimes people don't notice a lot of people figure out that oh if I take

notes I remember things better. If I take notes with my hands or remember things.

Robert: [00:06:34] So knowing things about how they use one thing or another kind of knowledge that's involved self-regulated work it is just knowledge about how cognition works like how to read the instructions for a task just on a very basic level knowing how to assess for yourself when you see an assignment how hard it's going to be and how long it's going to take rather than waiting for somebody else to tell us.

Robert: [00:06:57] Another kind of knowledge is self-knowledge. Knowing your own strengths knowing your weaknesses knowing how to interpret your emotional states when you're learning. Knowing how to judge how efficient and efficacious you're going to be when you're studying that sort of thing.

Robert: [00:07:11] So it's it also was comprehensive knowledge of not only the learning process but also knowledge about yourself. Knowledge about your environment and also involves a lot of initiative taking I would say you not only know about these things but you take charge to make changes and do things in a certain way based on that knowledge.

Robert: [00:07:28] So you know for me when you talk about lifelong learning you look at a lifelong learner that's really affected that you're looking at a self-regulated learner you know as opposed to someone who kind of needs people to tell them what to do all the time that will be sort of the opposite of a self-regulating learner.

Bonni: [00:07:45] And I would imagine that it's probably specific to a type of learning and I mentioned that an you're year old I'm so embarrassed to admit it but it's all about the authenticity of the four and a half year old knowing more about space that is certainly not by accident correct that that would mean that I was not a self-regulated learner for pretty much my entire existence as I can recall it. But now it's never it's never over and like I could start today and be a self-regulated learner in that particular context right.

Robert: [00:08:18] Yeah I think so. Well I mean you know if you look into the literature and ideas around psychology literature for two or three decades in some formulations of this idea kind of put it in a two dimensional axis where you have phases of self-regulation and areas of self regulation. Like some of those areas are things that I mentioned like your affect, your cognitive strategies and

so forth and phases have to do with it sort of before during and after the learning process.

Robert: [00:08:44] I think all of us self regulate at least some of the time some people self-regulate seemingly all the time in education. I think the trick is to kind of teach this and model the process so I mean I think you and your four year old is probably self-regulating very well on some level and not so well on other levels. And the same is true for you. So the two of you come together and that's what magic happens.

Bonni: [00:09:06] What's an area of self-regulated learning that you find yourself most challenged with that you're always kind of at working on?

Robert: [00:09:13] Oh that's a really good question. I would have to say it's I would have to say really it's affect. I mean sometimes I'll be learning something or working on something like working on a book right now. There was a lot of sort of learning new things in new areas like cognitive psychology that I hadn't touched since I was in college and I will get into it and I'll find myself getting bored or find myself feeling like I'm over my head that's going to take too much time.

Robert: [00:09:38] I struggle a lot with converting these feelings of sort of unmotivation. You could say. And say OK I'm not feeling... a self-regulated learner would turn around and say all right I'm feeling unmotivated What do I do about it? Sometimes the answer is I put it down and go take a break.

Robert: [00:09:55] Sometimes the answer is you know I just sit back and take a breath and just make myself do it. I struggle sometimes with knowing exactly what the best thing to do in that moment is. That's that's a that's a really key aspect of self-regulated learning is knowing how to manage these rough spots whether it's cognitive affective or whatever.

Bonni: [00:10:14] I mentioned to you been a little bit intimidated always when I have guests on their show such as yourself that are from stem fields and crazy out and I love coming across this article that you wrote about optimization problems in calculus because I thought oh my gosh I actually know what that is. I don't know how it is. I don't necessarily. I thought like I don't know exactly how the ins and outs of it all. But but I it did make me think that this is something open to all of us I guess I'm curious to you what are some of the characteristics that a self-regulated learner might use to approach a complex topic like optimization problems and calculus.

Robert: [00:10:54] Well you know the first thing they would do is go into a planning phase. A planning phase of things like my affect for example. Like do I understand what the words mean game optimization. They all have something to do with making things as best as they can and I guess you know calculus has a really specific meaning and so you know planning out how do I know what the words mean.

Robert: [00:11:15] How good am I at optimization? If for example you're in the middle of a lesson you've learned about optimization through class work and have your homework you would it's a plan for that homework by saying okay what do I and don't I know about what we did in class and where do I need to review my notes what do I need to go watch youtube where I need to go to the professor's office and practice problems do I need to find practice problems. If so where can I go to find practice problems. Who can I ask about where we go to find practice problems.

Robert: [00:11:43] There's all this sort of pre-planning phase that happens first. OK. So even things like planning out where you are going to study you know for example my calculus course students do homework online. If you are living in these crappy apartments your campus and the internet is bad and you have to be online then you need to plan this out ahead of time.

Robert: [00:12:04] I mean that's that's one of the things self-regulated learning does. And then you move into this phase where you're beginning to work on these things you've done the planning now you're working ahead and some things are going well and other things are going poorly and you pay attention to the things that are going well and ask yourself why are they going so well and what am I doing that's so effective and why is it effective?

Robert: [00:12:22] And why why should you look into things that aren't going so well you try to interpret them, manage them, tell you to take a break if you need to. Come back to work tomorrow and that sort of thing and eventually you know hopefully a student will work through this thing on optimization problems and successfully complete the assignment or study session or whatever.

Robert: [00:12:39] And there's a looking backward phase where student looks back and say OK what did I do that was good. What did I do that wasn't so good. What am I going to do to make it better next time. So if you look at the totality of the experience and all those phases in all those areas that's kind of what self-regulated learning would look like for a person setting that one thing.

Bonni: [00:12:58] We both talked about before I hit the record button not wanting this to be a show of definitions and by the way I think so far we have definitely lived up to our promise. But I would like to.

Robert: [00:13:08] Mention I do like I do like my definitions.

Bonni: [00:13:10] Well I'm going to ask you to give me one now because this next term is means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. How do you define flipped learning?

Robert: [00:13:21] OK so flipped learning is a pedagogical technique where students encounter concepts for the first time, new concepts for the first time, not in class but prior to class in their individual spaces through some structured sort of activities whether that is reading, reviewing, or game playing or experimentation or whatever they're encountering new ideas for the first time individually kind of all on their own or maybe with a small group informal group.

Robert: [00:13:50] And so it takes the first contact experience out of the class group space which is usually done through a lecture. Having taken that experience out of group space there is therefore a lot more time and space in that group space and so you turn that group space into an active and dynamic space for learning and experimentation. Where students are working on the top level cognitive tasks where we're all together with the professor.

Robert: [00:14:16] So it's called flipped learning because it's reversing the context that you usually see. Where class time and group space is spent getting first contact with things and then sort of the hard stuff the high level cognitive tasks is farmed out to students to do on their own.

Bonni: [00:14:30] And what do you see as some of the most common ways that people either maybe misunderstand what flipped learning should be or could be. Or maybe they just don't align with your definition of it.

Robert: [00:14:41] So the number one misconception I think by far that I've heard is that flipped learning is where you give students readings before class and then you have discussion during class. I get this a lot because people will say well it's something like the Oxford tutorial method flipped learning? Haven't we really been doing flip learning since you know like the 15th century. Why is this a new thing?

Robert: [00:15:04] The difference between simply giving things to do before class and having discussion in class is structure. So if we simply just kick students off the deep end or into the deep end of the pool and then expect them to produce in class that's flipping the classroom but it's not flipping the learning because students aren't getting any structure as to how to handle themselves are not learning how to self-regulate honestly.

Robert: [00:15:27] So there's a really close connection between flipped learning and self-regulated learning and in flipped learning what we're really trying to do is be intentional about putting students in a position day after day after day where they're practicing self regulating learning skills by encountering new concepts and making senses of all their own prior class.

Bonni: [00:15:47] This brings up a topic that I've been just wrestling with because I took a class from the hybrid pedagogy group and one of the real tensions I think it's healthy is just this around my desire to track things and their desire to say Stop trying to track things just let people explore and I'm not even doing justice at all to our ongoing conversations in this but but I wonder where you stand on that.

Bonni: [00:16:15] In this sense I do find it helpful or maybe I'm misguided but it seems like it has been helpful in my teaching to have some sort of accountability around this flipped learning model but am I just building in when are they doing it because quote unquote somebody is checking on it. And maybe I'm I'm negating their ability to develop self-regulated learning. Or do you find that a little bit of accountability helps?

Robert: [00:16:42] I think a little bit of accountability does help. And I think it's OK and not necessarily destructive to exploratory learning types of environments for us to have some guideposts of the going to indicate that you are where you're supposed to be. There's a time and a place for students to sort of really sort of the Montessori approach to education I guess. But in our education too I mean there are certain guideposts we don't want to just let it be free for all either.

Robert: [00:17:07] So I think it's OK and it's not destructive to the learning process to house a simple mile markers set up to let you know where you are and if you choose to get off the beaten path to explore a tangent that happens to come up you know where to get back on the path when it's time. It is not always OK it's to stray off the path. Right. There are certain things that we do need to accomplish and certain objectives that we do set up for classes in college University education. And this is just sort of having a mild way of making sure that we're there. I think it is helpful for everybody.

Bonni: [00:17:38] Could you give an example from one of your courses where you are having these guideposts and maybe what they look like and then maybe an example where the exercise itself is set up to pique the curiosity and we can explore and where wherever people might go is their own choice.

Robert: [00:17:58] Oh sure. Yeah I mean this does actually have a lot of mathematics which is kind of goes against people's intuition about mathematics is one of the great misconceptions about my discipline is that there's only about one right answer to a problem. The idea is to get the right answer as quickly and as error free as possible.

Robert: [00:18:15] In fact math is a highly creative discipline so we have these courses sometimes like I teach a course called discrete structures for computer sciences. It's a math course for computer scientists to teach them some of the basic mathematical language of their discipline.

Robert: [00:18:28] And I have students working in groups it's a flipped learning environment so students are reading about things like grass and trees and relations and so forth before class and they come in and I'll have them work on a problem like if I give you a certain graph you know how how. What's the relationship between the number of edges it has and the number of nodes that it has.

Robert: [00:18:49] Just kind of an open ended question and there could be a right answer to this. There could be a definite relationship that we're looking for. But the way that students come up with explanations for those can be all over the place and many many times I know I've had you know one thing in my mind where I expect students to lock in on this one algorithm for answering this question students will come up with something so totally off the wall different that I really have to sort of step back and think are they am I just being stupid or are they actually right. Maybe both.

Robert: [00:19:22] So there's ways to kind of keep on the track to kind of finally discovered this one basic fact about graphs that I want to discover many many different paths in which to take to get there I would say. So this is like all the time in classes. Seriously I mean it's almost everyday that we're interacting.

Bonni: [00:19:42] And then what would be an example where you do have those guideposts you do have that accountability that you're able to really determine whether or not someone participated in the flipped learning.

Robert: [00:19:53] Sure. You know in the way I search for things I have this model for the individual's face or pre- class. Not all of my classes are face to face I teach an online classes where it is difficult to talk about pre class because we don't actually meet at all but I'll leave that for another podcast.

Robert: [00:20:09] I have this model for pre class activity called guided practice and it's a kind of structure that I use that gives students adequate structure to do these initial explorations on their own without a lot of grief and they watch the video they read, do some reading sometimes I'll have a computer simulation set up for them to play with and they have to answer questions about these things sometimes are computational questions sometimes are conceptual and they do have to answer them.

Robert: [00:20:34] I don't read them on correctness though I just want to know what they think. And they submit the results of these of the practice activities through Google form and so I can pull up that Google form before grading it on the basis of was it turned in on time did you get a good faith effort. And did you give an answer to everything and if you do that these are graded pass fail. So I just grade them a pass if they do all these three things.

Robert: [00:20:55] Very often students are getting the right answers on these things and often they don't. But at least all of the patterns of the misconceptions so there is an accountability in place. The accountability is not to give the right answer but to simply show me that you're making progress toward some of these basic learning objectives that we have set up.

Robert: [00:21:13] That's what the guided practice exercise were aimed at so it's a real easy to handle a bit of accountability for students. You do have to engage in the material. You do have to get into the reading of the viewing or whatever else you do have to answer some questions that but you don't have to be right. You just have to be in the ball game as it were.

Bonni: [00:21:32] Do you know that they actually watched the video or is that not being tracked.

Robert: [00:21:36] That is not tracked what so ever I just give them resources. Ok so I don't really care what they use or what they don't use they may do all of it.

None of it. Some of it they may augment with other things they have. I know for a fact that one of my students takes the book we are using so she's using her roommate's book. OK. I don't care.

Robert: [00:21:53] All I care about is are you are you showing progress toward the basic learning objectives. However you do that is up to you. So I give students a lot of choice. That too was kind of a self-regulatory thing like if you're a self-regulating learner you know what you need to learn and you have a choice to pick how you learn it. That's that's a hallmark of self-regulated learning and it's definitely intentionally why I started those activities that way.

Bonni: [00:22:14] You used the word bake in one of your articles in reference to baking the self-regulated learning into courses that I loved that I didn't want to use the word without credit in my source. How do we bake self-regulated learning into our courses.

Robert: [00:22:28] Well it's like anything else you fold it into the ingredients I mean. So when you when you're doing the course when you're building the design of a course the very get go you're asking yourself things like who are my students what are their needs where they're coming from more class levels what are the majors and things like that. And right off the bat. As soon as you start looking at the situational statistics the demographics of your course are realizing just like we mentioned at the top of the show you know you look at your kids or your parents and you think there is a now and a not yet.

Robert: [00:22:56] And like I've got to teach my students computer science but I also have to teach them how to be individuals who can learn whatever they need to learn later on down the road. So you know when I think about the learning goals half of the class right the very beginning when I'm laying the ingredients out I have to think about one of those goals has to be something like self-regulated learning.

Robert: [00:23:15] Some little glacier like incremental progress toward being a self-regulated learner I have to have that as a goal. I've got to be clear about it. I've got to be intentional about it. I have to assess it. I have to give assignments that require it. I have to get students thinking about explicit terms. I have to award it when it happens that I have to penalize it when it doesn't happen. And so this is just part of the DNA of the course.

Robert: [00:23:39] Like I said just like anything else that you're baking you have to pour the ingredients in and set the right temperature. You have to put the put it

into the course of the code of the course and make sure it's well supported all throughout.

Bonni: [00:23:51] Sometimes when we start using approaches like this we run into the barrier that that is not what students are accustomed to from other classes they've taken at our institution or at other institutions. Yeah. How do you then set up early in the class this notion that we have to unlearn the way things maybe have been structured before this is going to be a little different.

Robert: [00:24:14] Now here's where the good news really happens I think with flow warming and self-regulated learning. So all you have to un-learn is the last six years. The pervious 12 years to 20 years with these students that's been nothing but self-regulated. Right right. I mean I could pose it to my students like this like if there's ever a question of time or why we're doing this a certain way I'll say OK stop. And just for three minutes write down what do you think the three most important things you have ever learned in your life are like just go and don't hold anything back.

Robert: [00:24:49] And the three minutes are up you start asking the students I will get things like potty training. OK learning how go to the bathroom by yourselves. Pretty important thing that you learned as part of your existence or eating well of learning how to feed yourself learning how to speak your language walking. I mean we go really down to brass tacks you know he says like oh well trigonometry it was one of most important things in life.

Robert: [00:25:15] I mean I love trigonometry. Nobody ever says this. I wouldn't say that either. So we get all this stuff out all the table and I put it all on the board and I said wow man you guys are so good at eating going to the bathroom and walking speaking. He must have had an amazing lecture in those subjects. And this is dead silence. Dude we didn't have anybody lecture and I say exactly you didn't have to have anybody teaching you these things to learn.

Robert: [00:25:42] Somehow... You have a native process that is just beautiful and intensely human that just drove you to these things. It was trial it was error it was learning it was monitoring and somehow you made it and here you are I mean you're you're you're basically a viable adult now we're just going to finish the job that's what that's what the university is for.

Robert: [00:26:02] We got to do it with these higher level learning skills. It's called Higher Education for a reason it is education about education, it is learning how

to learn. I have another exercise that I give the students to a very first class I always asked them what do you think is the purpose of the university education like why are we here and all is every single time every single group in the class will report back that learning how to learn is the most important aspect of university education and I say you are exactly right about that.

Robert: [00:26:30] And how are we going to do that in this class. And eventually when I give them free rein to sort of design how the learning experience is going to work it looks like what I have planned because I am thinking the same thing too I'm thinking they're going to learn how to learn. The only way to do that is to be put in positions where you are learning how to learn and you have some coping kinds of support. But it's not just teaching yourself I mean there's there's some there's some structure there but you can't say that you're interested in teaching students how to learn and then spoon feeding them everything and design your course completely in the opposite direction.

Bonni: [00:27:05] Derek Bruff introduced me to the idea of course trailers had a great post and I wrote a follow up to it. And so I decided to make a couple for my classes this fall and I decided to.

Robert: [00:27:16] I saw it actually I watched them online.

Bonni: [00:27:18] Oh I forgot about that yeah. And I decided to go the easy way.

Robert: [00:27:21] When you post things on Twitter it's there forever.

Bonni: [00:27:25] I'm all about this lean startup idea they're not like as good as the ones that Derek had used in his examples but I use the the trailer templates that are in iMovie right. And it made it one that was more it looked like a romantic comedy type of feeling than the other one. My the gal that watches our kids said it looks like. Oh my gosh. Super popular drama lots of people die. Haven't watched it yet.

Robert: [00:27:48] Game of Thrones?

Bonni: [00:27:49] There we go.

Robert: [00:27:51] I haven't watched it either but it's a super popular one where lots of people die.

Bonni: [00:27:55] She tells me that all the main characters you can't get tied to anybody in the show. So I had originally posted it to Twitter and on the Slack channel.

Robert: [00:28:03] That's quite a way to start a course, by the way. What are you saying about my success in the course? Go ahead.

Bonni: [00:28:09] I had originally the idea was to see which one of these I should actually use for the class and I don't remember who it was who suggested it but this would put them both up there and let people decide. And I thought well that's kind of a little mini maybe introduction the beginning of a class to say that you're going to have a lot more autonomy you're going to have more agency in this class this is going to be a place where you're not exactly directed step by step down every single path than either but that might be a small example of how to have early impressions in the class.

Robert: [00:28:41] Absolutely. I think that makes a great first impression on literature saying possibly before the first day that you know two choices is a really important part of this class. That's why you get that message across. I think students are going to be pretty well exposed.

Bonni: [00:28:55] You said something earlier in the episode about that being another podcast episode and I hope that means are coming back. Before we get to and before we get to the recommendations part of the show though I would love to have you share a little bit about the book that your read reading not the one you're reading.

Robert: [00:29:11] I am reading and also writing actually.

Bonni: [00:29:13] The one you are writing.

Robert: [00:29:13] So the working title of it is called Flipped Learning in the University: A User's Guide and is it going to be whether I like it or not sent in to the publisher which is Stylus Publishing. Pretty pretty popular. A lot of great read come out of there really honored to be part of their roster - will be submitted in September and I'm guessing you know after the blood letting has happened from the editors and I've actually done it right. It'll be out sometime in 2017. So this book is kind of a combination of a lot of things that I've been thinking and writing about the stories of the last five seven eight ten years ever since I started.

Robert: [00:29:52] A lot of these originated blog posts from like casting out nines some of them are parts of my workshops that I give sometimes I just thought it would be cool to have one place one one document that combines all the things that I've been thinking about for a really long time about flipped learning. So it's really a user's guide.

Robert: [00:30:08] If you're a newbie or experience practitioner practitioners like it's curious you can get the book pop it over somewhere else. That book is going to be something that will answer a question that raises some more questions for you.

Bonni: [00:30:18] I am seriously looking forward to reading it and also to continue the conversation in 2017 that's amazing it's going to be great.

Robert: [00:30:26] Yes I'm looking forward to. Really happy with the way it's turning out so far. Probably I will make major changes of course after it is sent it. But we're very very pleased the way it's turning out. I think it's going to be close hopefully it's going to be very useful and helpful to a lot of people.

Bonni: [00:30:38] This is the time in the show where we each give some recommendations. And I wanted to share about my recommendation which is called Clarify and I need to first share that I find myself in a position doing something that I find absolutely mind numbing and that is developing some self-guided workbook for our faculty because we are switching over to a new learning management system in the fall.

Bonni: [00:31:04] And they wanted me to do face to face training and sitting down for hours at a time telling someone step one click here step 2 click here is not my idea of fun nor is it my idea of how we learn best. And so I have ended up just creating where they can go more self-paced and then we have some games that will play in between to reinforce the learning and instead of having to do that in something like Microsoft Word clarify is built out of the box to do it all for me.

Bonni: [00:31:30] I just go along and go through the steps and grab screenshots as I go and I can have sequential steps where I can easily click and add numbers to the steps and add notes it exports into everything imaginable every kind of PDF full color one to black and white. You can even customize the output. You can export it to HTML and one of the nice things that I love is that I can actually export all the screenshots so if I wanted to make a PowerPoint to

go along with it or use some of the graphics I don't have to go recreate those same screen shots outside of the program.

Bonni: [00:32:02] So it's my recommendation for today it's on both the Mac and a PC and it's the best \$30 I've probably ever spent on an application as far as timesaving that's clarify.

Robert: [00:32:12] That's sounds super cool.

Bonni: [00:32:13] And what do you have to recommend today.

Robert: [00:32:15] OK so I have people who know me know that I am kind of a real sort of a control freak. I will say control enthusiast about my time and my tasks and I try to keep a tight log on my productivity. That's all I want to share in my top five productivity tools. Very quickly here I practice a method of productivity called getting things done which is related to David Allen and his book Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress Free Productivity.

Robert: [00:32:40] First of all I recommend this book. I want to recommend a piece of software called todoist. There's no way to describe it would be a strong to do list manager although it can be considered to be almost anything needed to be used to do is to keep track of what projects the tasks in the projects the tasks that are the main task headings I mean I'm able to tag it all my tasks with with anything I want.

Robert: [00:33:05] Any kind of metadata I feel like I mean I tag with context with time required with the energy level I have to be able. So for example if I am sitting here at four o'clock in the afternoon my time on Thursday and I need to get some grading done what can I do I don't have to think about these things to hold them in my head just dump them and you todoist. And I can set up a search query for grading low energy which is my 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Thursday mode. And up will show all the tasks that are available at that time in that context the the grading scheme.

Robert: [00:33:41] So when I have something that comes across my desk or something comes across my brain I just immediately throw it into to do it. And once a week I go through everything so I never keep anything like it. That's the idea.

Robert: [00:33:55] Also want to give a shout out to some other tools that I use for getting things done. What is Google Keep. Google Keep is an amazing free

piece of software as part of Google ecosystem. A note taking software. It's great for sort of passing thoughts because I have an Android phone an Android phone. You can actually set up voice recognition so you can go your phone and say OK Google make a note too and then Google will automatically voice transferring it and dropped it into Google Keep. So anything that comes across it is targeting your phone that way. Amd there it is and it's there across all platforms and todoist is all cross-platform as well.

Robert: [00:34:29] Also want to give a shout out to Evernote Dropbox and Google Calendar you've probably heard of at least two of those three things ever. No it is wonderful. It's for holding anything that is in a file like a web page it's where it goes. It has a very strong tagging system systems work in tandem with my project that it belongs to when I found it where I was when I found it so whenever I want to draw something future I just do a quick search using search feature and it brings up the dropbox allows you to keep all my files sent across all devices. And Google can order is just I don't know how people or Google calendar. That's all I can say about that.

Robert: [00:35:04] So todoist especially if you haven't checked this out and you're interested in boosting your productivity. You can track your stuff all the better. Highly highly highly recommend todoist.

Bonni: [00:35:13] I learned something new about you. On today's episode I did not know you were a GTG guy cause.

Robert: [00:35:18] I am a serious GTG guy.

Bonni: [00:35:20] Now I know who to tap into for episodes when we bring those themes back because it tends. I was looking were actually about to roll out and knew I was going to say a new version. A new Web site a new design of the teaching in higher ed Web site. And one of the things I'm super excited about is there's a lot more discoverability you can go and browse through different categories of the episodes to get to just the ones that that you are most interested in.

Bonni: [00:35:43] But I was realizing when I talk about productivity it's almost always just me and like hm probably to get some other people on the show to talk about these kinds or my husband and I, Dave, my husband and I. But yeah it would be great to have you back and talking about some of these things too because it's so important.

Robert: [00:35:57] I think a great conversation is part of it even as part of a larger conversation about work life balance. That's a really important issue in managing your productivity is absolutely essential for me to some sort of sanity in your work life balance. I feel like that's why I have three kids that were really really active in our church and community and so forth. And like I let you do what teaching take over everything if I didn't have our stuff together honestly. So I gave it up.

Bonni: [00:36:24] Absolutely well I so look forward to future conversations and just want to thank you for your time today. I know you're actually having construction done at your house.

Robert: [00:36:33] That's never any construction on the kitchen. Yes.

Bonni: [00:36:36] Yes. And I just appreciate also your investment in the teaching in higher ed on the slack channel. It's been really fun to learn more from you and I'm just I just so appreciate all that you give back to higher ed to have and I'll be more effective in our teaching.

Robert: [00:36:48] Thanks Bonni, I appreciate your podcast too and I appreciate you having me on.

Bonni: [00:36:52] It was so great having Robert on the show and I look forward to having him back. We talked after I stopped recording about him coming back to talk more about productivity tools and when his book comes out I just really enjoy getting to learn from him. So thanks again to Robert.

Bonni: [00:37:08] And I wanted to mention that the Teaching in Higher Ed web site is going to be changing and there's going to be lots of exciting features for you to go check out once it's there. I talked about it on a prior episode. It's still on its way.

Bonni: [00:37:20] But I did want to make a note that oftentimes when people move their Web sites that also then of course moves the podcast feed. And you may we're we're crossing our fingers this doesn't happen but you may find that in the coming weeks all the sudden you have five shows or so show up in your feed that you've already listened to.

Bonni: [00:37:40] We're going to do everything we can to avoid that on our end but it's just a common thing that happens where the feed just can't quite keep up and you might get some duplicate shows that show up and my apologies in

advance. I hope that that's not too distracting to your giant evergrowing podcast feed and that you will keep listening. And I just look forward to all of our conversations in future shows.

Bonni: [00:38:03] As always I'd like to encourage you to subscribe to the weekly updates if you haven't done that yet you can do that at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe and that will allow all the showboats to flow into your email once a week and an article written by me on either June or productivity. And it will also get you a copy of the free ed tech guide with 19 tools to help you with both your teaching and productivity.

Bonni: [00:38:29] Again that's at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe and if you want to join that Slack channel and have conversations with people like Robert you can get in touch with me at teachinginhighered.com/feedback and we can get you into those conversations as well. Thanks so much for listening and I'll see you next time.

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