

Bonni: [00:00:00] Today on episode number 216 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Peter Felten joins me to talk about the research on engaging learners.

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Bonni: [00:00:22] Hello and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm 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 improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:50] I'm grateful to Susannah McGowen for sending over a recommendation to have Peter Felten on as today's guest of Teaching in Higher Ed. He's actually been on my list of perspective guests for quite some time and I was glad for the extra nudge just to move him back up to the top to make an invitation. Peter Felten, the reason why his work has fascinated me is that it is so much around being able to suss out the research on what works and doesn't work. And that of course is a common question that I get asked by many of my colleagues and people who listen to the podcast.

Bonni: [00:01:24] Peter Felten is a Professor of History, Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning, and Executive Director at the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University. His books include the coauthored volumes *The Undergraduate Experience, Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most, Transforming Students, Fulfilling the Promise of Higher Education, Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching, Transformative Conversations*, and the coedited book *Intersectionality in Action*.

Bonni: [00:01:59] Peter has also served as President of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, sometimes abbreviated SOTL. And also of the Pod Network. Pod is the organizational development arm or faculty development arm- I shouldn't say it's an arm, it is an association worth checking out by the way if you are in that area or interested in pursuing it. He's the Co-

Editor of the International Journal for Academic Development and a Fellow of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in undergraduate education.

Bonni: [00:02:32] Peter welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Peter: [00:02:36] Thanks Bonni.

Bonni: [00:02:37] It was so fun to work with you about the things we might talk about. And I think there could be a 50 episode Peter Felten podcast and would just be getting started. So I was really excited because you suggested looking at some of the research on engaging learners and that really just instantly captivated me. I'd love to hear a little bit from you of why that's an interesting area of research for you. And then also I know that there is a quote that kind of frames our conversation for today.

Peter: [00:03:08] Sure. Well Bonni, I've been interested in trying to get my students more engaged and more focused on their work and more deeply into history, which is what I teach ever since I started teaching. And now I help direct something called the Center for Engaged Learning which studies students/ undergraduates and how they learn and why they learn in and out of the classroom. And when you have a center like that people say "oh. Why is it called engaged learning?" And it's actually interesting. If you dig the research, engaged engagement is not very well-defined in the research. And so we start in my college, we started thinking about how would we define engaged learning? Especially in the context of classroom teaching and learning.

Peter: [00:03:53] And so we thought and we thought and we read and we synthesized. And then one day I was rereading this wonderful book How Learning Works and right in the beginning of the book there's a quote from Herbert Simon, who's a Nobel Prize winner. And the quote just resonated and got me thinking. Here's the quote: "Learning results from what the student does and thinks and only from what the student does and thinks. The teacher can advance learning only by influencing what the student does to learn." I love that quote because it captured my own experience. I can't learn former students. My goal is to influence what they do and what they think. And so the challenge for engagement, it seems to me, is to shape what our students do and what they think in the most productive ways possible.

Bonni: [00:04:43] So it's kind of this humility that comes from... I can't control all of this, but then the recognition that I certainly could influence some of this. So I see this great sort of tension between those things and almost like a- I don't

know if this is taking it too far but separating out causation from correlation. And that you're trying to then create almost like the fertile soil that would have the greatest likelihood of producing learning. But like you said, that we can't do the learning for them.

Peter: [00:05:17] Exactly. It's about creating the conditions and the support and the challengers who are really good to lead students to do what they need to learn. No matter what discipline you're studying, no matter what level of students you're talking about.

Bonni: [00:05:32] And I am really interested in the sort of two groupings that you're going to walk us through today. And there are going to be five things we'll look at that students need to DO in order to be engaged. And then we're going to look at three things that students need to THINK in order to be fully engaged. I know for each one of these, some of them interrelate. You're just going to give us an overview and then we'll we'll chat about them. Let's start out with what precisely should the students do in order to be engaged?

Peter: [00:06:09] So Bonni, my synthesis in my thinking about this work, students need to do 5 things, they need to spend time focused on educationally purposeful activities. The first thing they need to do is put in time.

Peter: [00:06:24] The second thing connected to that is put in serious effort. Learning is rarely simple, especially meaningful learning, and they need to persist through confusion and challenges and get beyond what they knew already. So we have time and effort.

Peter: [00:06:39] The third is they need to get feedback and the need to respond to that feedback because no one can learn everything they need to learn on their own. And so that's one of the reasons you need faculty and peers around to help guide you and give you feedback so students can adjust both their learning and the amount of time and effort they are putting in.

Peter: [00:06:59] The fourth thing students need to do is they need to practice applying and using what they're learning in different contexts. One of the biggest problems with a lot of teaching and learning in higher ed, I think, is that students practice only in one context and then they get out of the classroom and they don't know what to do. So they need to spend time, effort, get feedback, practice.

Peter: [00:07:19] And then they need to reflect on what they know and how they came to know it. They need to be metacognitive in other words. And so if students do those five things, and if we can prompt and encourage and reward students for doing those five things I think they're going to be engaged and I think they are going to learn.

Bonni: [00:07:38] You talk regularly, you give workshops at your institution and also do a lot at other institutions too. Is there one of these areas or a couple of them that you find a pattern where we, faculty really struggle with doing this part well? Are there a couple of ones that really pop out to you?

Peter: [00:07:57] Yeah I think feedback and practice in some ways the hardest and they're the ones we can control the most. We can assign things and hope students put in lots of time and effort, but we can't control that. But the quality of the feedback we give them and then the kinds of practice we required them to do with what we're asking them to learn. Those are things we really can shape and control and often we could do better than we do already.

Peter: [00:08:28] So the feedback that can be really helpful often is critical but it's constructive. Too often I think we give feedback that is just sort of warm and fuzzy or not understandable to students.

[00:08:43] So a really helpful scholar who's written about this is Darnell Cole at the University of Southern California. He has this phrase he talks about constructive criticism. And he says what we need to do students is when we're giving him feedback, be very specific and distinguish between the work and the students themselves. In other words you say Peter I have high standards in this class for student work. And your work here doesn't meet those standards. Let me help you understand why the work doesn't meet the standards. I believe you can meet those standards if you work hard and you get the help you need. Right? And that's different than just the way I was trained to give feedback as a historian which is Peter while your essay fills a whole page, there's no coherence in it. Good luck next time, a sort of feedback sandwich which Cole's research says isn't actually very productive or helpful for students.

Bonni: [00:09:41] It's so fascinating to me just how much of our biases come into our approach to feedback. I think of myself early in my teaching that I actually assumed that all students sort of came in with the same capabilities. And I mean it's a silly notion to have had. I can't tell you how I got to it but just sort of like that- I think well actually I can tell you how I got to it it was because that's how it was for me.

Bonni: [00:10:07] So if I applied myself academically, if it was something I cared about, I did better at it. So I just assumed that if you're doing well in a class or not it will be in direct proportion to how much you care to put the effort forth. And that is of course not at all the case for our students. And so when it comes to feedback just including in that feedback the belief that we have that we can meet those standards, talking about what they are- and then I heard you also saying that we help to depersonalize it. It's about the work, it's not about you as a person. I mean because sometimes you'll get the sort of biases around laziness or all this whole entire swath of students all from whether it's an ethnic category of race or ethnicity, or a category of generations. I mean "all students today, they just don't have the work ethic we used to have!" Those kinds of things get us into trouble.

Peter: [00:11:04] Exactly Bonni. And for years [laughing] - this is going to be like Peter's preaching confessions of bad teaching from his past. But for years, I would offer to my students in history courses the opportunity to turn in a draft of their essays before the essay was due to get feedback. Right. And what would happen of course is in my mind at the time, good students would turn in the drafts and they would get feedback, and they would write essays, and they would write good essays, and they would do well. Other students didn't turn in drafts and I would say well I have good students and I have lazy students.

Peter: [00:11:41] And then one day a colleague challenged me about this and said maybe students get A's because they turn in the draft. Right, because they get the practice and the feedback rather than that it's an inherent quality in them. So now reassign my students to turn in drafts and get feedback on the first essays which takes more of my time upfront. But then I spend less time grading those essays later because they're higher quality. Plus, as you were saying Bonni, I get frustrated sometimes when students don't engage with the feedback I give them. I spend a lot of time poring over their papers and writing all these things and they just look at the grade and then throw the paper away.

Peter: [00:12:25] Well that's actually fairly rational behavior. They don't think what they did on this essay connects in any way to what they're doing on the next one. But when I give them feedback on a draft, they can see how they can use that to improve this paper which will help them do better on this paper. So they can use that feedback more so now instead of just saying to my students basically if you're a good student, turn in a draft and if not too bad for you. I now require them all to turn in drafts, giving them practice doing what good

students do and getting feedback on their work once I can still use the feedback.

Bonni: [00:13:04] So one of the other elements you talked about that also we have challenges with more likely is with giving opportunities for practice. And you talked about particularly in different contexts. Could you give a couple of examples of what it might look like if we were doing this well? A type of practice opportunity that did involve different contexts.

Peter: [00:13:26] Sure. And the contexts won't matter or differ quite a lot depending on your discipline. But in general, I think there's at least two ways about this. One is just thinking about different genres of writing. So instead of having students write just a standard five paragraph essay, have them write an editorial for a newspaper, or a letter to a representative, or a short story, or a poem, or something like this. And what they're doing in those cases is having to shape their knowledge in different ways for different audiences which is giving them practice thinking about what they know and what matters and what doesn't matter in those audiences. You can do the same sort of thing with genre by having students instead of saying solve a mathematical problem, graph that solution or graph the equation and think about it. So they're representing their knowledge in a different way. So that's one way to practice transfer.

Peter: [00:14:31] The other is to think about outside of school settings where they might need to use this work and have students for example find something new, or find something from the news, or find something from popular culture, or find something from a magazine or a blog or something like that and bring it in that is related to what it is we're studying.

Peter: [00:14:55] And so what they're having to do then is think about what is it? What's at the core of what we're studying right now and where does that exist in the world? So if you're studying chemistry, where can I see chemistry in the world? And what could I bring in to class that represent something related to this particular kind of chemistry that we're studying right now? So you're asking students to take their knowledge out of the classroom and creatively apply it and then bring it back in.

Bonni: [00:15:23] What I have found to be so helpful about that too is that I've just seen so much more interdisciplinary thinking come on the students parts when they get practiced at doing that. And then they're sort of not only learning more about what it is that a given topic is for a class but also then ah I have this regular ability to go seek information out and start to make sense of it

and see how it connects with what I'm learning. And that's just such a great practice to have our students doing that's going to help them their whole lifelong learning.

Peter: [00:15:56] I agree Bonni. There's a psychologist, David Perkins, who heads this framework around knowledge. And he talks about proactive knowledge which is the kind of knowledge you can use in weakly cued settings. In other words, so you study economics and then you're having a conversation in a bar one evening or you're watching the news or you're reading the newspaper and nobody says to you, "Hey this is an economics problem." But you think, something I learned in Economics, opportunity cost for example, is relevant here and helps me inform how I think about this and how I respond here. And Perkins' point is that most of life is weakly cued, but most school is highly cued. Right? So they come into the econ classroom and they know I'm supposed to be thinking like an economist right now. What do I know from economics that's relevant here? If we want students to be able to use their knowledge and apply their knowledge in weakly cued settings I think we need to give them practice in weakly cued settings.

Bonni: [00:17:02] And the other things that you're - I guess we are going to get to them a little bit later - but if we can do that in such a way so that it's not rote, they're not doing it because they have to but because we've done something that has ignited their curiosity- what a fun thing, a gift really to give them and talk about really creating engaged students.

Peter: [00:17:24] Exactly. And then they find out who knew that people in the world care about history, or need to know something about the past or need to be able to write effectively, or need to be able to speak a different language or anything like that. That's much more motivating when just learning is bounded by the four walls of the classroom and I'm learning so that I can give that knowledge to the professor and she can judge me as a person. That is not motivating for anybody.

Bonni: [00:17:50] So we have been looking at the first category of ways of creating more engaged learners. And these are what students DO to learn. And so we looked at time, effort, feedback, practice and reflection.

Bonni: [00:18:06] You talked about time and effort being something that we have a little bit less control of. But I'm sure there are some ways in which we might influence the amount of time or effort students put in. What are some of

the things we could think about that would help us influence even though ultimately we know we don't have control over that?

Peter: [00:18:25] Time and effort are hard to control outside of class. And so part of what I think the effective teaching involves is getting students doing things in class that they can extend and do much harder work outside of class. So they get into the practice putting in time and struggling when you're around, when their peers are around. So they're not only putting in the time and struggle outside of class. So I think active learning in general is really helpful in these ways.

Peter: [00:18:53] I think starting problems or starting homework assignments or setting up why are you going to read this text and what are you going to encounter in this text and why it might be challenging to read this text before students go out. So not telling them what's there but explaining why I want you to read this short story and that yeah this one is going to be strange but it's worth it. So I think that helping motivate students, not just by cheering them on but by helping them see meaning and purpose in what they're doing is important.

Bonni: [00:19:30] How I've been thinking about active learning and even even just what the classroom looks like, it still continues to evolve. And one of the things I've realized just even in the last month or two is that I tend to embrace more techniques that are pretty structured. So when I think of active learning I'm thinking of going through a poll everywhere quiz together or a case study or even I mean I've got these games I invent with envelopes and strips of paper.

Bonni: [00:20:00] But those are all highly structured. And what I don't want people to miss from what you just said is that- and I'm sure that also relates to having reflection, opportunities for reflection. But we can have a little bit less structure in the classroom, not as much of things that require quite as much guidance but ok go look at the assignment and write an outline for it. Something that isn't quite as- it's also more individualized that they're going and taking a look at it themselves and then you know thinking through with their outline might be or what questions that they might have as they go to start to research a topic.

Peter: [00:20:40] Right. I think sometimes we feel like as teachers we need to control everything and we need to know exactly what the outcomes are going to be when we set students on a task and I think we need to be really clear about the purposes of an assignment and what we're asking students to do.

Peter: [00:20:59] But I think there can be quite a lot of space within an assignment of how they tackle that work and how they do that. And that's much more motivating. I think sometimes students will experience what happens in our classes as so highly structured really they're just walking and jumping through the hoops we set them. And it's much more interesting as a human to be able to look around and say what's most interesting to me is how can I pursue that? So can we create some space within our assignments where students can bend them in their own direction and maybe that's not something you do the first assignment with first year undergraduates, you sort of built to it over the semester. And you can help them build up some confidence and some creativity and then they're capable of doing a lot.

Peter: [00:21:50] One of the things I've learned through my teaching career is that students sort of wait me out. And if they think I'm going to step in and fill in the blank. They will wait. But if they come to realize that I'm not going to and they really didn't have that space to act and that expectation that they can be creative, an expectation that they can try new things, they'll do it. But they don't naturally walk into my class thinking here's an opportunity to be creative and open and curious. And so I have to help them become more curious in class.

Bonni: [00:22:26] We've been looking at five things that students need to do in order to produce more engaged learning. And we're going to in just a moment look at three things that engaged learners need to either think or feel.

Bonni: [00:22:41] Before we do that, I wanted to mention that today's episode is partially made possible by the makers of TextExpander. TextExpander I've talked about on recent episodes is one of the first things I ever install on a new computer and what it lets me do is really automate some of my typing. So we sometimes see this with auto correct. You see all this auto correct fail humor on Twitter under that hash tag where it wasn't quite what we had meant to type. Well I don't find to be the case at all with text expander. I see text expander successes 100 percent of the time in my particular case. It really helps make my work a lot faster and then it frees me up to be able to spend more time engaging with the people that are really important in my life.

Bonni: [00:23:29] So what it does is I type in a few letters which are what is known as a snippet and then it expands into a larger set of text everything as simple as a phone number I never remember all the way, to letters of recommendation requests, to the show notes for the podcasts, to common emails I might send out at the beginning of a semester and I just want to hang onto them. It does all kinds of things to me. And it's really a great system that will work on my mobile

devices as well as on the computer and sync all back and forth. It's a great thing and we just thank TextExpander for their sponsorship. Not only can we use it as individuals but we also can use it as teams. It is just a tremendous service and totally worth checking out. If you go to a textexpander.com/podcast. Please choose Teachin in Higher Ed as where you heard it and you can go get a special promotional discount on it if you go use that link. So thanks once again to Text Expander for sponsoring today's episode. And now we're going to go back and hear about the three things that students need to think or feel in order to be more engaged. Back to Peter.

Peter: [00:24:41] And Bonni just as we begin with these three, I want to go back to the Herbert Simon quote because he says it's what students do and what they think. I've had some colleagues say to me really what we're talking about in think is what students feel. And I think we can substitute that word. That's fine. But the Herbert Simon quote is: "Do and think." [laughing] He's got the Nobel Prize, so I'll follow him.

Peter: [00:25:06] I think what they need to THINK fundamentally are three things. The first is that they need to feel "I belong here." Students need to believe that they belong in higher education, that they belong in the discipline, that they belong in this particular class in order to learn effectively. Students who lack a sense of belonging are likely to interpret normal academic struggles as evidence that they can't succeed. And students who see evidence that they can't succeed all around them are likely to give up more easily. So one thing they have to feel, they have to think is that they belong.

Peter: [00:25:45] The second thing they need to feel and think is that they can learn this. They need to have a growth mindset and recognize that sure math is hard but the hard part is what makes math interesting and I am human who is capable of learning and growing and developing.

Peter: [00:26:02] And then the third thing they need to feel to think is that the work they're doing, the time they're spending is meaningful. Students who value what they're doing are more motivated, they're more persistent because they see a sense of purpose even when the work is difficult. And the key there is that they need to feel that they belong, that they can do this and that this is meaningful to them. And I think sometimes especially when I was growing in my career I was thinking about why when what I was asking students to do was meaningful to ME. And that isn't nearly as important as it being meaningful to THEM and them seeing that meaning and sense of purpose.

Bonni: [00:26:48] I - in the last year - was doing some - I was on a task force at my campus. I had a really wonderful opportunity to interact for a sustained amount of time with people outside of what we call the academic house and in particular some people from student affairs and that was just so wonderful to get to know them. And in this work that we were doing so much of this sense of belonging really ties back to retention. You want to retain your students in a college. You're going to help them have that sense of belonging.

Bonni: [00:27:22] But this is really one of the first times that I've seen that tie back then actually to our students learning. I'm sitting here thinking of it like of course you want to retain our students, it's costly to run a university and when you spend all this money to market to try to get one student and then they leave. That's from a business model standpoint not good. But could you talk a little bit more about how it's also not good from a learning standpoint.

Peter: [00:27:45] Sure. Bonni, the research is really quite clear that students who don't feel- the language isn't that they don't have to feel like they don't belong. The researchers talk about belonging uncertainty. Right. So we could have two students in our class, one of whom let's say parents went to this school that they're attending right now, they have known all their life they're going to attend it, they know exactly what they want to do. They have a really strong sense of belonging at that institution and in their discipline. Right.

Peter: [00:28:17] And then you have another student who say she's first in her family to go to college. Not everyone has in her life has said you of course are going to go to college and everything's good. And she's not sure what she wants to do there. She has a sense of belonging uncertainty, right. So she's looking around and experiencing things saying do I fit in here? Or don't I? And so I'm the first assignment, they both do poorly and you give them identical feedback. Right. The student who feels like he belongs in your class is likely to either say, "Wow I need to work harder college is different than high school" etc. Or he might say "Professor Felten is a jerk and that was an unfair assignment." But he's going to blame others or he's going to work on his own putting extra effort.

Peter: [00:29:04] A student with belonging uncertainty is going to look at this and say "I guess I don't fit. I guess I can't do college level work. I guess this isn't for me." Right. So they're much more likely to see challenges and setbacks in what other people might interpret as minor things as evidence that they don't fit, that they can't cut it. So if you have that sense of uncertainty, you're really humbled in what you can do to succeed.

Peter: [00:29:38] The good news about the research on belonging and mindset is that faculty and others at institutions can do a lot to help students develop a sense of belonging. Some of that can just be conveying to students that you know they're capable as we were talking about before when we were talking or feedback. I know you're capable. This work doesn't show it but I know you can do this. Why don't you go to the math lab and get some help? Right.

Peter: [00:30:03] So one thing we can do is convey. The other is think about active learning again or other techniques as ways to give students practice where they can see small successes. It doesn't have to be graded small successes but just activities in class that they can do that might be interesting. They might not succeed at, but they could see that wow everybody in class is struggling with this question. It's not just me. It's again a students belonging uncertainty might encounter some difficult work in a physics class or something and say wow I can't do this. And not look around and say nobody in class can do this right now. So I actually do fit in.

Peter: [00:30:44] So one thing I've done in my own quest is to try to build a sense of belonging and not sort of rah rah you can do it way is first day of class, first thing I have my students do is get in small groups and put a number of historical sources in order. That sounds like an easy thing but I don't give them any clues of what the sources are and they usually quite close in time. I teach modern U.S. history, so there might be five or six sources. The first one being from 1960 and the last one from the 1970 or something like this.

Peter: [00:31:19] What they have to do, they start reading and laughing and looking at these things and trying to sort out what we know? And what don't we know about the past? And partly that's a good exercise to get them in and practicing what we do in history.

Peter: [00:31:31] But it's also a way of connecting with their peers in class which develops some sense of belonging, knowing something about their peers and what their peers do and don't know because nobody ever gets this all the way right. So they need each other. And they're starting to feel like they belong with some people in that room and they belong in that class. Because if they have that on the first day, they're much more likely to be successful all the way through. And sure there'll be retained at the university too but mostly they will be able to learn history or whatever it is I'm teaching.

Bonni: [00:32:05] That's really fun to hear you talk about it. It reminds me a little bit of I had a student on episode 199. And I didn't know she was going to say this

but she was talking about how playing the game Quizlet live in my class had really given her the sense of belonging like you said with the interaction she had and that it helped them be able to connect and more authentic ways not just in that class but actually in other classes that they had together as well. And it's fun where you just see these- I mean you have to be careful because it does need to be, it needs to tie it to number three. So not only do we need to create elements where they have more of a sense of feeling a sense of belonging, more of the sense of confidence "I can do this" or "if I can't do it now I certainly have the capacity to be able to do it one day." But also it's got to be meaningful. So I can't just seem like a game for a games sake. Like it actually has to be, in your case what a great example of you know tying these things together and beginning to help me think like a historian and ask questions and see some of the mystery that's in it.

Peter: [00:33:08] That's right Bonni. I think we can have a sort of broad sense of what meaningful is too. So in some cases you could say this is meaningful practice because this kind of question is going to be on the exam. Right. And that's meaningful to students but also just the competition that happens in the class in the exercise I just described is every group is trying to get these same things in order first. That in itself many students find meaningful. I never actually tell my students it is a competition I just get them all in small groups and giving these and say your goal in your group is trying to get these in order. They think it's a competition. And that competition they find motivating and they find meaningful. That's not going to be meaningful for the whole semester. But it's a start. It gets them into that activity. And then we find that their understanding- what I like about that particular assignment/ activity is they start caring that they don't understand the various things happened in the 1960s and how they relate to each other. And they started saying "I thought it worked like this but it didn't." So they started asking questions themselves. And when they're asking questions about history and the first day, I win.

Bonni: [00:34:28] Before we go on to the recommendations segment, Peter would you just walk us through the five things that we can have students DO that will make them more likely to be engaged learners? And then the three things we can help them THINK or FEEL to help them be more engaged learners.

Peter: [00:34:45] Sure. So I think students need to do five things: they need to spend time and put in significant effort, they need to get feedback on the work they're doing, they need to practice what they're doing in different contexts, and then to reflect in a metacognitive way about what they know and what

they don't and how their mind is working. Those are the five things they need to DO.

Peter: [00:35:11] They need to THINK three things. They need to think I belong here in this discipline, in this course, at this institution, in higher ed. They need to think "I can learn this", they need have is a growth mindset that even though something is hard I can persistent and I can succeed. And then they need to think "I find this meaningful. I Find this work meaningful. I see the purpose in what I'm doing and I care about the results."

Bonni: [00:35:37] Thank you so much for helping to orient us with this and we'll have all of this in the show notes too as well as all the authors and other articles that you sent me. That will be at teachinginhighered.com/216

Bonni: [00:35:51] This is the time in the show where we each get to give our recommendations and I wanted to recommend a podcast because what I need is a new podcast to listen to so my podcasts cue can be even longer than it already is. But in all seriousness this is a very important time for us, speaking of history in the history and the future of our country is to be knowing more about the Supreme Court. And I just recently started listening to the podcast called Amicus and that is Dahlia Lithwick. She has some wonderful guests. She talks about the Supreme Court and its highly engaging and highly informative. I think if its not already on your podcast cue, it would be worth putting in there because theres going to be much said about supreme courts in the coming months at least here in the United States of course. So thats my recommendation is to check out the Amicus podcast, if you have not already. And Peter, I'm going to pass that over to you now.

Peter: [00:36:48] Great Bonni. I'm going to recommend something that is also not directly related to my work but has been on my mind a lot. It's an essay in The Journal American Medical Association (JAMA) by an oncologist named Toby Campbell. The essay is called When Minutes Matter. It's a really really thoughtful reflection on bucket lists and ordinary minutes of our lives. Dr. Campbell is an oncologist and he works with a lot of patients who have terminal cancer and are in the process of dying. His essay is a reflection on how often those people don't actually want to do what we would expect when you find out your going to die in a month or six months, which is they don't want to go to Hawaii and jump off a volcano or something. They want to have a cup of coffee and read the newspaper and have a conversation with someone they love without having the cancer intervene in their lives while it's happening.

Peter: [00:37:54] So I've been thinking about this both for personal reasons, but also just thinking about you know my work with students and my work with colleagues, lots of times it's easy to focus on the big moments and the really crucial things and how actually a lot of profound things can happen in those small ordinary interactions just on a regular Tuesday class or a conversation with a student during office hours doesn't have to be a big meaningful event for something profound to happen. And so that's what I've been thinking about.

Bonni: [00:38:29] Peter thank you so much for being on this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. You're such a wealth of information and I hope you'll come back too because I know you've got some new books coming out and you also have some books we didn't get a chance to talk about today. So just thanks for your ongoing contributions to the community and I hope you'll be back.

Peter: [00:38:47] Thanks Bonni. I hope so too. And I'm a big fan. I look forward to listening to lots more episodes.

Bonni: [00:38:53] Thank you so much. What a pleasure it was to get to have this conversation with Peter Felten. Thank you so much. And thanks again to Susannah for recommending him.

Bonni: [00:39:06] If you have been listening to the show for awhile and want to recommend it to one of your colleagues, one of the biggest things that holds people back especially in higher ed from listening to podcasts is not realizing how easy it is to do. So maybe the next time you're having coffee or going for a walk, just ask them if they're listening to podcasts. And if they don't know how, show them how easy it is to subscribe.

Bonni: [00:39:28] Google just came out with a Google podcast app. It is becoming even easier for us to listen to podcasts than it ever has been before. Apple has a podcast app built right into its operating system. I hope you'll share how easy it is to subscribe to some of your colleagues and spread the word about the show. Thank you so much for listening and I'll see you next time.

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