GRANT WILLIAMS: Hi. My name is Grant Williams, and I'm a professor in the English department. During 2015, I designed a brand new course to be offered online in the winter term of 2016, English 2200, "Creativity, Imagination, and Writing," is a course in rhetoric-- that is, the traditional discipline of composition and communication.

It dwells exclusively upon rhetoric's first stage of writing, called invention, otherwise known as pre-writing or brainstorming. My content examined various process models of imaginative cognition and proposed different techniques, exercises, and resources, by which students could enhance their brainstorming skills for their academic writing. Because English 2200 was brand new, I began designing it with the hope that I would see 40 to 60 enrollments.

As things panned out, 400 students signed up. This shocking predicament threw me into a pedagogical tailspin. I was not prepared to manage a small army of TAs. Neither was I prepared to answer 20 to 30 emails a day.

When reflecting upon my experience, I made many rookie mistakes. The course had too many moving parts, especially loads of activities and assignments. As a result, some students, along with TAs, became frustrated with the amount of work. And this problem was compounded by a few earnest TAs who graded that work a little too rigorously.

Moreover, I spent a high percentage of my time responding to emails of students who missed deadlines. I should have invested some of that time in trying to connect with the class through weekly emails. When all is said and done, I probably learned more new things than the students did.

The experience ramped up my understanding of the cuLearn platform, which I've incorporated into all of my teaching since that time. This particular LMS is endlessly customizable, thanks to its suite of resources and activities. In English 2200, I primarily depended upon the lesson tool. But since then, I've used others.

My experience with creating English 2200 has taught me the importance of backward design. When planning an online course, an instructor should choose his or her readings, activities, and assignments from the vantage point of the course's

ultimate goal, or capstone assignment. A capstone, the course's last assignment, should be a summative assessment, which tells the instructor whether or not the students have achieved the course's main objectives.

Backward design ensures that at every turn in the online environment, students will accomplish tasks that help them reach their final destination. It keeps both the instructor and student focused on the big picture learning outcomes. Designing English 2200 taught me that cuPortfolio is a perfect tool for creating a positive capstone experience.

It is easy for students to pick up, it allows them to access their multimedia and multi-modal ingenuity, and it can be managed effectively through cuLearn. As well, you can integrate earlier assignments into cuPortfolio, so that students can see how their skills develop from module to module. Here's how my capstone was integrated into the course's formative activities and assessments. For me, it started with the following learning objective-- by the end of the course, students will be able to use knowledge of how their personal creativity works, according to their strengths and weaknesses, so that they can design their own invention exercise or technique for facilitating compositional brainstorming in their particular discipline.

A large part of the course work consisted of a range of exercises that enabled students to generate ideation and develop arguments for their academic writing. After completing each exercise, students would reflect upon its strengths and weaknesses and would consider the inclinations of their own creative processes. Drawing upon what the student learned from these assignments, the capstone assessment challenged one to design a customized exercise that would tap into one's own cognitive and disciplinary strengths.

[? cuPortfolio ?] brought formative and summative assignments into one place, so both student and instructor could easily track progress and move together toward the course's goal. I hope that my brief discussion has pointed to what I want to identify as my best advice for teaching online with cuLearn. Always make sure that you align, not just your content, but your use of a technological tool with your pedagogical goals.

Does the tool enable the student to learn the knowledge and skills your course

strives to impart? For the fall term, focus on a few tools so that you can anticipate any pitfalls and feel comfortable handling the tools in your course's landscape of learning. During the Zoom meeting, I will expand upon the lessons I took from English 2200 and address the ways in which different cuLearn resources can be effectively aligned with pedagogical goals. See you there.