

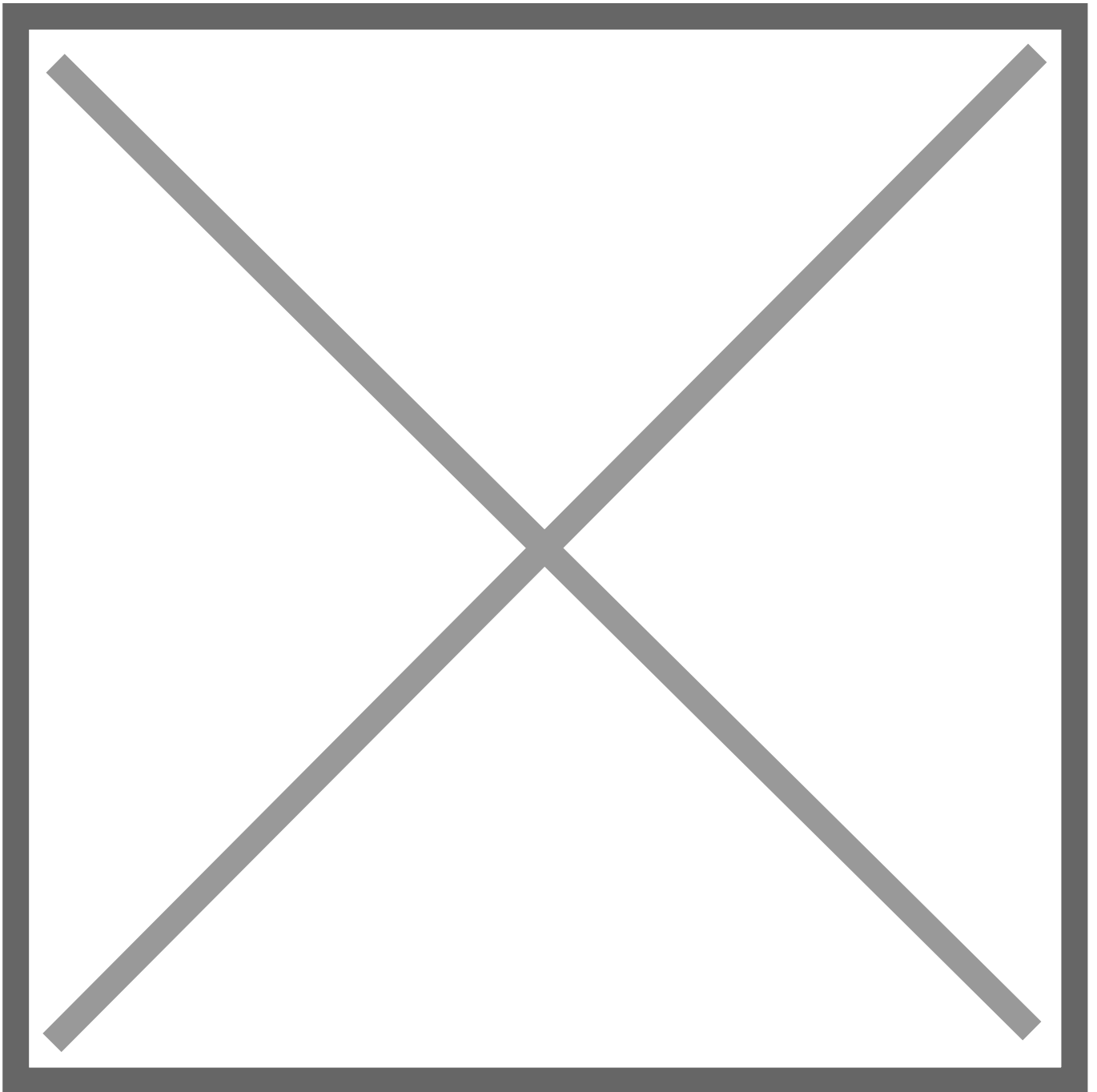
The Failure of "Engaged Learning"

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About a decade ago the administration of UVU fell for an old MEd (Master of Science of Education) trick: invent some stupid thing and claim it would revolutionize teaching. These "innovations" never do. MEd's keep publishing that it will and administrators with no sense keep falling for it.

The big one they fell for at UVU was "engaged learning." It's the idea was that students are unmotivated and by engaging them they would become attentive learners. It's maybe workable for a class of first graders to find social groups, but at the time I thought it would never work at the college and university level because our students aren't educationally motivated by finding social groups. But UVU bought into the idea completely and now departments and faculty are bombarded by "engagement" to meet the needs of the administration. We've circled the idea in almost every meeting for the past decade.

We just had, and are still having, a great test of of this idea. The education establishments response to COVID-19 was to go online and they taught all K-12 and some university students one great lesson: distracted passive education. And the students really learned that lesson. Deep down. Since then it's almost impossible to get students in a difficult class like math or physics or chemistry or anatomy to work deep into math or problem solving. They remain distracted passive learners. YouTube learners. Listeners of the word, not doers.



And this was the perfect test to see if engaged learning can pull these distracted students into action. And it hasn't. Not at all. I thought it might take a couple years and students would be back to pre-passive educational capacities, but they aren't moving at all away from distracted passive learning. In other words, engaged learning has failed utterly to engage passive students. This was the big test, and now we know: engaged learning didn't work.

What do students need? Same as they did before COVID: responsibility for their own learning. That's always been the only motivator for university students to excel. It was the only thing before engagement, before COVID, before online classes. It's the thing that produces skilled workers, brave businessmen, intelligent educators. Not all students will respond, as they didn't all respond before, but the percentage of those who do respond will rise. In the past, probably 15 of a class of

30 would take responsibility; now it's 5. And the number who just fail out was 5, now it's 10.

It's time for UVU to dump "engaged learning" as a failure, and embrace student responsibility. Stop treating university students like first graders.

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