Histology Flipped Classroom + Small-Group Discussion + Canvas = Active Learning

The MS1 Histology course led by director Dr. Aileen Anderson and co-director Dr. Xiangmin Xu has integrated a new series of active learning sessions into their curriculum this year. They have designed these sessions to follow a flipped learning model where students watch faculty-created podcasts on histology topics (for example, this week’s topic was the Circulatory System) and complete a quiz through Canvas, our new learning management system, prior to an in-person small-group activity session. In the small-group session, the 104 MS1’s are divided into 26 teams of 4 via automatic group assignment facilitated by Canvas. The teams prepare presentations (in a format of their choice) in response to faculty-generated questions based on the podcast content. All presentations are posted into a Canvas discussion board so that they can be shared across all teams and enable asynchronous discussion on each presentation if desired. A handful of groups are randomly selected to present to the class at the end of the session providing further motivation for students to engage in their work. The first two active learning sessions ran with great success: the students were highly engaged, the student-generated content was effective and clinical correlates offered practical relevance. Drs. Anderson and Xu have demonstrated the value of implementing innovative instructional design with the use of educational technology to effectively achieve their curricular goals. We expect the remaining active learning sessions to have similar outcomes and will assess the students’ learning and perceptions of this format to confirm this.