

Decoding a Decade of Feedback @ myUMBC's "Check My Activity"

How do students view their own Blackboard usage compared to peers?



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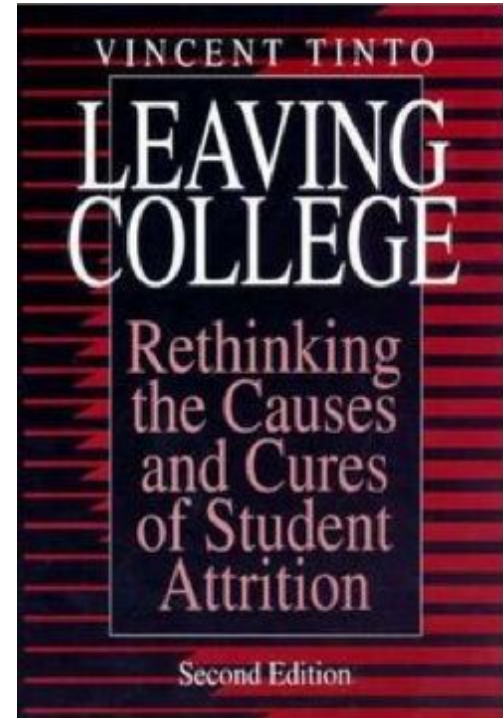
Karen Chen

Student Responsibility for Learning

“Institutions can't absolve students from at least partial responsibility for their own education.

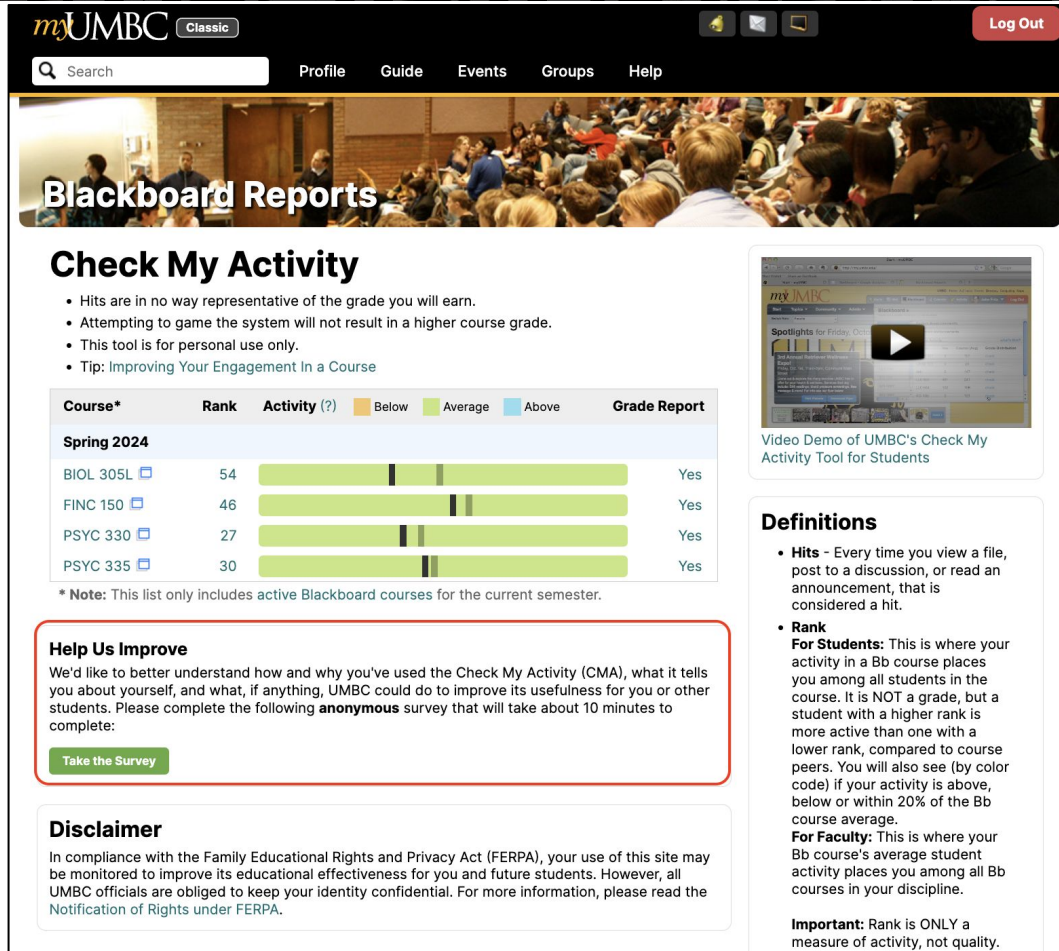
To do so denies both the right of the individual to refuse education and the right of the institution to be selective in its judgments as to who should be further educated.”

~ Vincent Tinto (1993)



CMA Background (John)

- Launched in 2010.
- Lets students see their Bb activity compared to anonymous summary of course peers.
- Part of 2016 dissertation (n=~2.7k FT freshmen/txfers in FA13/SP14)
- **Key finding:** students using CMA 1.5x more likely to earn \geq C grade or \geq 2.0 term GPA ($p < .001$). But only 54% did so. More info: umbc.edu/go/cmafaq
- CMA Includes **opt-in anonymous feedback survey**, but never analyzed – until now. 👍



Check My Activity

- Hits are in no way representative of the grade you will earn.
- Attempting to game the system will not result in a higher course grade.
- This tool is for personal use only.
- Tip: Improving Your Engagement In a Course

Course*	Rank	Activity (?)	Below	Average	Above	Grade Report
Spring 2024						
BIOL 305L	54					Yes
FINC 150	46					Yes
PSYC 330	27					Yes
PSYC 335	30					Yes

* Note: This list only includes active Blackboard courses for the current semester.

Help Us Improve

We'd like to better understand how and why you've used the Check My Activity (CMA), what it tells you about yourself, and what, if anything, UMBC could do to improve its usefulness for you or other students. Please complete the following **anonymous** survey that will take about 10 minutes to complete:

[Take the Survey](#)

Disclaimer

In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), your use of this site may be monitored to improve its educational effectiveness for you and future students. However, all UMBC officials are obliged to keep your identity confidential. For more information, please read the Notification of Rights under FERPA.

Definitions

- **Hits** – Every time you view a file, post to a discussion, or read an announcement, that is considered a hit.
- **Rank For Students:** This is where your activity in a Bb course places you among all students in the course. It is NOT a grade, but a student with a higher rank is more active than one with a lower rank, compared to course peers. You will also see (by color code) if your activity is above, below or within 20% of the Bb course average.
- **For Faculty:** This is where your Bb course's average student activity places you among all Bb courses in your discipline.

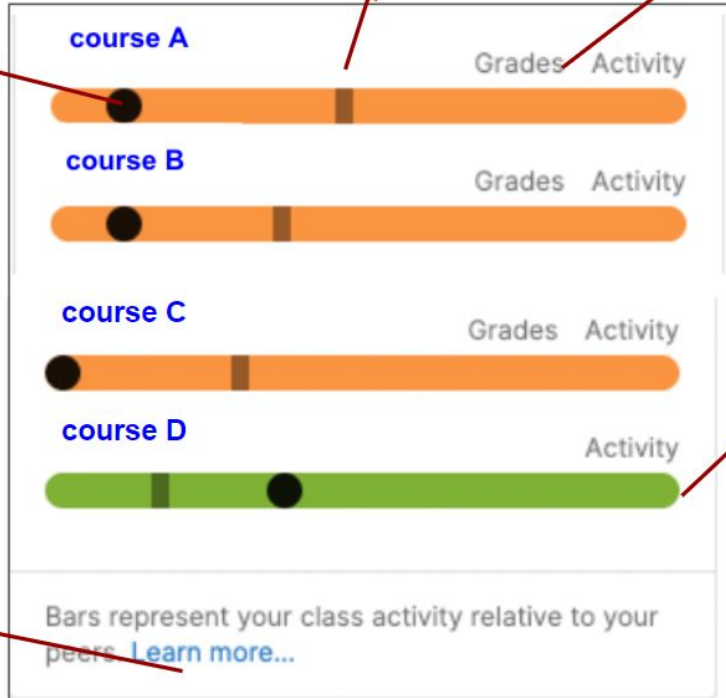
Important: Rank is ONLY a measure of activity, not quality.

A Class Average Activity

C Grade Distribution Drilldown

B Student's Activity

Your grade (if you have one) is highlighted in red.



Grade	Users	Hits	Avg. Hits Per User	Sessions	Avg. Sessions Per User
1.00000	1	552	552	30	30
1.25000	2	270	135	31	15
1.50000	1	191	191	22	22
1.75000	8	1529	191	153	19
2.00000	12	2292	191	234	19
2.25000	32	5153	161	572	17
2.50000	145	28775	198	3250	22
Total	201	38762	192	4292	21

E On-demand Information

- Disclaimer
- Definition
- Video
- Presentation

D Activity Drilldown

Your Usage

Tool	Hits
Announcements	1
Check Grade	4
Content Folder/Content Area	243
Discussion Board	2
File	50
Other	76
Send Email	2
Test	12
Total	390

Course Usage (Average Hits per User)

Tool	Hits
Announcements	3.94
Check Grade	4.19
Content Folder/Content Area	104.53
Discussion Board	1.95
File	32.09

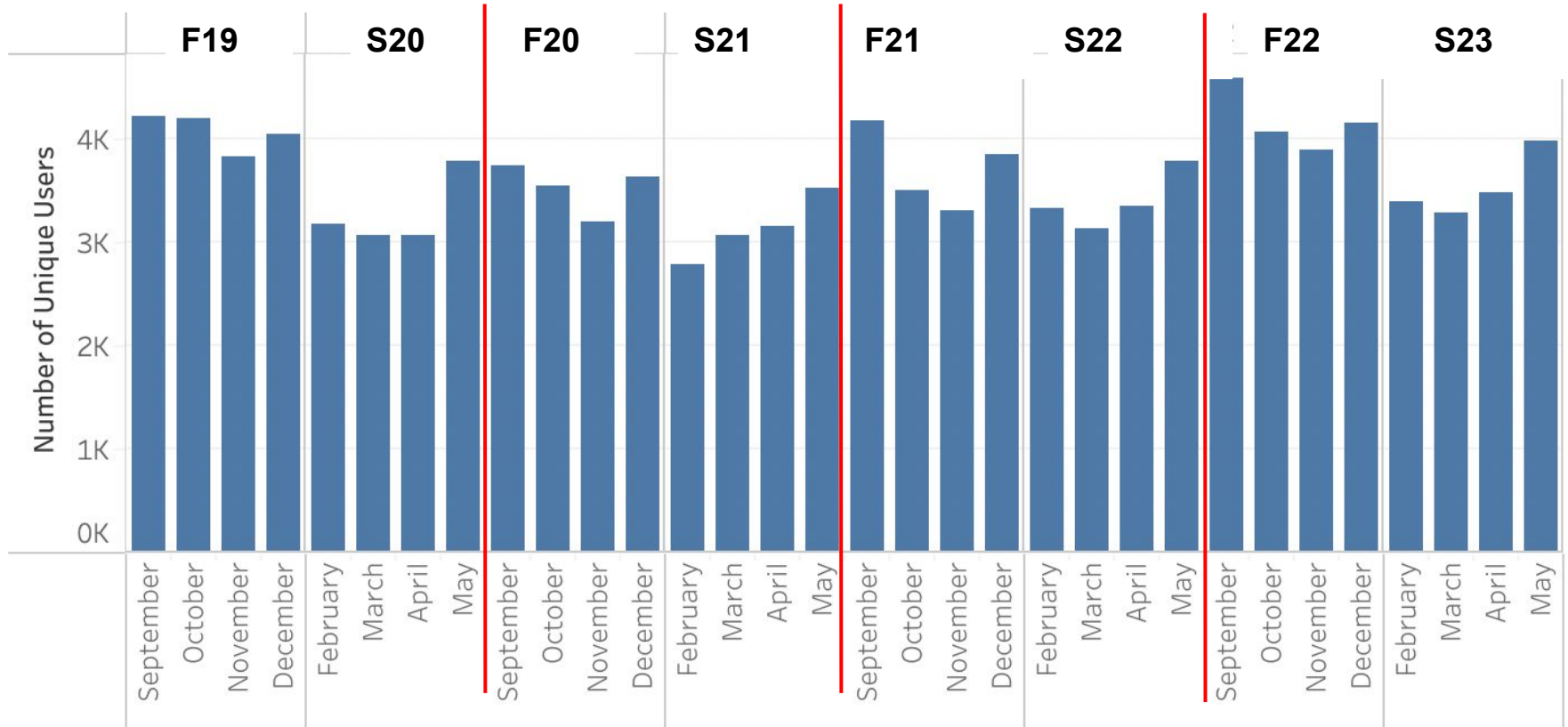
Introduction

Qualitative analysis of anonymous student survey data collected over a decade from over 500 students regarding their use and perceptions of the myUMBC Check My Activity (CMA) as a Learning Analytics Dashboard (LAD).

Why?

Emphasize the importance of student feedback in refining and improving the effectiveness of educational technologies.

CMA Usage: Number of Unique Users



What is the problem?

Despite the potential benefits, there's a lack of in-depth qualitative analysis on student feedback regarding their actual use and perception of LADs post-deployment.

Research Questions

RQ1: Why did students use the CMA platform, and what are their perspectives on how it could improve course engagement?

RQ2: What design implications can be inferred from students' feedback?

Data Collection

- Opt-in survey responses (~500)
 - Focus was on whether the students used the CMA tool or not
 - Whether they feel if a tool like CMA helps them improve their engagement in the course. Why or why not?

Example responses

"if I am struggling on a particular concept and noticed I received a lower grade on a particular assignment compared to other students; I know I have to spend extra time studying on that particular concept."

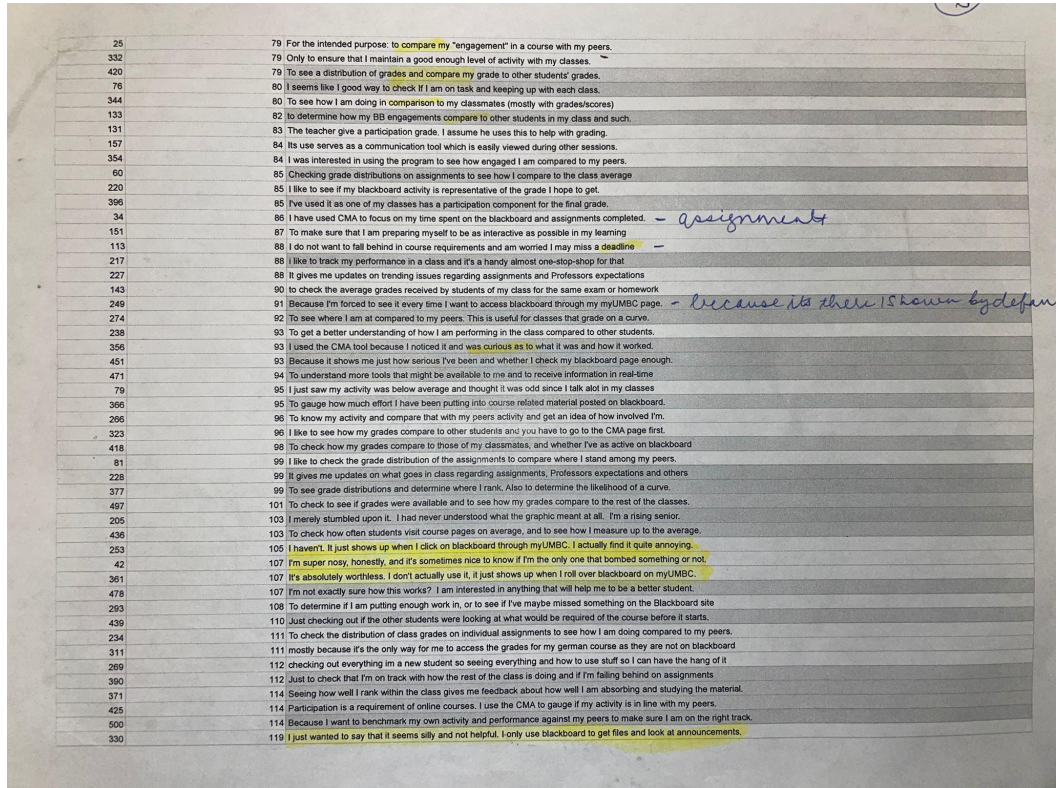
"I was curious at to what it showed. Although in some respects I may be in competition with my peers; it is really myself that I truly compete with. "

"To compare my activity to other students. I feel as though I work harder than most of my classmates but still end up with mediocre scores and I want to see if that is true or not."

Analysis Approach

Two phases

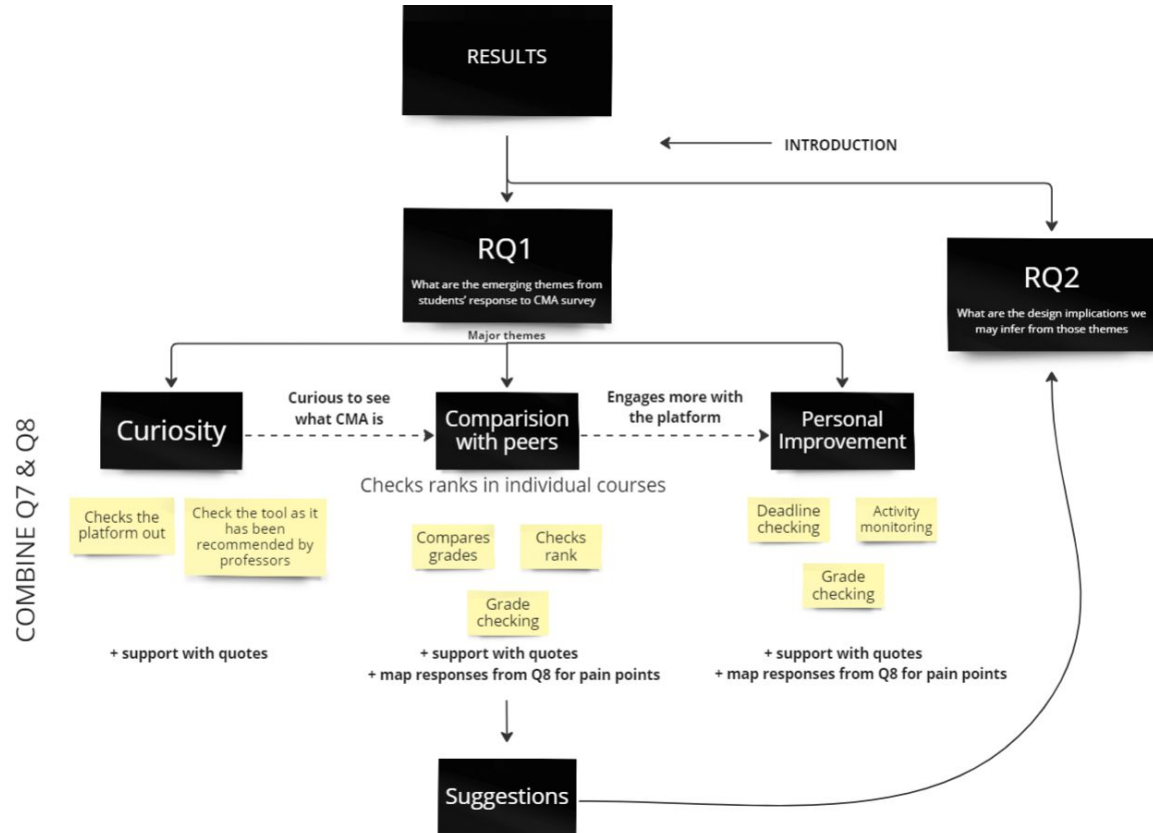
- Inductive Coding
- Conceptual Modelling



Analysis Approach

Two phases

- Inductive Coding
- Conceptual Modelling



Themes Identified

- Comparison with Peers
- Check personal Grades and Progress
- Keeping up with the Assignments
- Motivating

1. Comparing with Peers

A significant number of students utilized the tool primarily to compare their academic performance (grades on assignments and exams, as well as overall course engagement) with that of their peers.

Students expressed that seeing themselves lagging behind peers in terms of engagement or grades on certain assignments prompts a reassessment of their study strategies and motivates them to adjust their habits accordingly.

For new or returning students to online education, the ability to compare their performance and engagement with peers provided valuable insights into how they can improve their participation and understanding of course material.

"If I am struggling on a particular concept and notice I received a lower grade on a particular assignment compared to other students; I know I have to spend extra time studying on that particular concept."

2. Checking Personal Grades and Progress

Many students rely on CMA for real-time access to their grades and to monitor their personal academic progress within a course.

CMA facilitates a deeper level of self-reflection among students regarding their study habits, participation, and engagement levels. This self-awareness can be a catalyst for developing more effective study strategies, leading to better academic outcomes.

In courses where participation and online engagement are key components, CMA proves especially beneficial. It supports students in assessing their academic standing and dedication to the course beyond mere grade comparison.

...my points on CMA are always above average which makes me feel like I am working harder at trying to always follow up with class; assignments and grades. If my points ever went low it would definitely help me improve my engagement in a course"

3. Keeping up with Assignments

Several students reported using the tool to stay on top of their assignments and deadlines, finding CMA valuable for checking due dates, and tracking assignments.

“I’ve found that if I start slipping in rank it usually means I am missing some assignment; or underestimated the difficulty of some assignment.”

4. Motivating

CMA acts as a vital source of motivation by providing students with feedback on their level of participation and engagement in the course. This feedback mechanism allows students to gauge their activity and performance accurately, serving as a catalyst for enhanced engagement.

“. . . I believe it could help me understand/improve my engagement in the course. It’s quite motivating and it helps me to assess myself and my study habits.”

The tool fosters a sense of healthy competition among students by allowing them to compare their performance with that of their peers. This competitive element serves as an extrinsic motivator, encouraging students to engage more deeply with the course content and strive for better academic outcomes.

“By knowing what other people’s grades are; it will motivate me to try harder.”

Suggestions/Concerns by the students

- *“I don't understand what the tool is measuring. Especially since we don't really use blackboard much to check grades or post on discussion boards. My instructor does everything via email.”*
- *“...sometimes I leave myself logged in for days on my home computer and I'm actually doing multiple sessions but it seems only to be counted as one. I'm sure some other students are doing the same; so it could factor into their results as well”*
- *“I first looked at it because I was curious. I look at it periodically; but I still don't know exactly what the info means.”*

Design Implications

Provide Support for Sense-Making - *“I don’t think it helps me understand OR improve my engagement much at all; primarily because I don’t know what constitutes a “hit”*

Improve Relevance and Utility - *“..I’m actually looking for something more helpful; like grades; but they aren’t there... so it’s a metric... of some sort. But It’s not useful; other than to make me feel neurotic about how often I click the course..”*

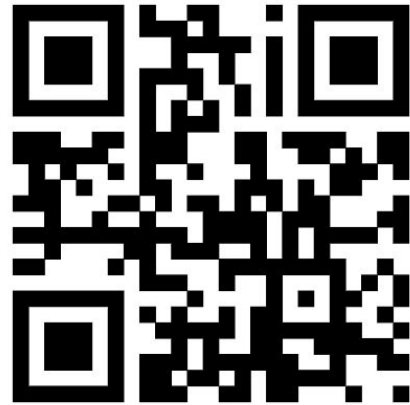
Consider Alternative Metrics Beyond Hits - *“I would like to see some kind of combined score that accounts for usage time and active time as well. If I spam reload; I can fake the score and also potentially affect other students.”*

Consider External Factors that Affect Engagement - *“It’s on CMA which is my only place to access materials in a virtual environment. As a graduate student; I think the classes are too small for it to be meaningful and find it distracting”*

Next Steps

- Student Perception and Misunderstandings of LAD
- Need for Redesign and Clarification
- Proposals for Improving Engagement Measurement and Course Design

Thanks, Questions & Feedback



<http://tiny.cc/128478>