

# Playing the Role of Teamwork Facilitator: Using role play to demonstrate strategies to facilitate teamwork

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**Abstract**—This special session will be an interactive conversation around the key strategies instructors can use to engage their students in the processes necessary for effective collaboration and successful teamwork. Session participants will reflect on and discuss what these necessary processes are, learn about ways to facilitate these processes, and, through facilitation role play, have the opportunity to actively practice facilitation strategies on a simulated student team.

**Keywords**—teamwork, facilitation, collaboration

## I. DESCRIPTION OF SESSION CONTENT

Teamwork is a crucial skill for professional and academic work in engineering, with many engineering courses utilizing teamwork for class assignments and projects. However, students can struggle to collaborate effectively to capitalize on the cognitive and social benefits of successful teamwork. Research has shown that a key factor contributing to this is students' inability to regulate the complex interactions involved in teamwork [1]. Students who are able to engage in these group monitoring and regulation processes develop deeper understanding of the material, produce higher quality outputs, and have more positive attitudes towards teamwork. Students who do not utilize these processes or who employ less optimal processes experience lower performance, negative interactions, and alienation [2].

As students work in teams and face challenges, instructors can impact how students move forward and learn about the collaborative process. Through in-class instruction and facilitation, instructors can promote student mastery of the collaborative processes needed for successful teamwork. Collaborative processes discussed will include communication, planning, critical evaluation, and group monitoring. This session will be an interactive conversation about key collaborative processes and strategies for instructors to identify and facilitate these processes in their course activities.

## II. GOALS OF THE SESSION

The intended goals of the special session follow:

- Participants will gain an understanding of skills and processes necessary for successful collaborative teamwork, including an awareness of current research related to the constructs.

- Participants will be able to identify ways that instructors may promote and help troubleshoot these processes when facilitating teamwork.
- Participants will reflect upon their own teaching to consider changes they may want to incorporate when structuring and discussing team projects.

The intended audience for the workshop is broad, including any engineering instructor who utilizes teamwork in class and any faculty member who facilitates teamwork in the lab; the skills and processes discussed would also appeal to attendees who are interested in further understanding and improving their own work in teams.

## III. EXPLANATION OF INTERACTION

The majority of the special session will be spent in interactive components, including reflection, group discussion, analysis of teamwork in sample team video clips, and teamwork facilitation roleplays. Initially, session participants will draw on their personal experiences with teamwork to brainstorm what processes are necessary to achieve quality collaborative interactions during teamwork. Participants will then share the ideas developed during their individual pre-reflections in a large group discussion of the suggested processes and their relationship to the processes supported in current literature.

Following this discussion, participants will analyze the first video clip of teams working to solve a problem for successful and unsuccessful occurrences of collaborative processes. Participants will then engage in a series of role play activities to simulate common student team interactions, with a different participant playing the facilitator each time. The 'facilitator' will be tasked with identifying the collaborative process(es) that are lacking and intervening to encourage the 'team' to engage in collaborative monitoring and regulation. Team scenarios will include issues in both discourse and management processes, such as a "Wait to start until the weekend" group and a "Conflict avoidance leads to no discussion" group. Between the role play activities, participants will analyze the second team video clip.

Following the teamwork role play activities, the session will conclude with a final reflection activity in which participants will build on the instructional collaboration facilitation strategies identified during the role plays, discuss how these strategies can be incorporated in the classroom, and what

training and assessment techniques can be presented to students to increase quality collaborative interactions during teamwork.

#### IV. SESSION AGENDA

(0:00-0:05) Introduction and Pre-reflection on processes used in teamwork

(0:05-0:20) Large group discussion of processes necessary for collaborative interactions; Discussion of research-based framework of 4 key teamwork processes

(0:20-0:25) Analysis of first teamwork example

(0:25-0:45) Role play teamwork scenarios 1 and 2

(0:45-0:50) Analysis of second teamwork example

(0:50-1:10) Role play teamwork scenarios 3 and 4

(1:10-1:20) Group debrief and final reflection on applications in the classroom

#### V. JUSTIFICATION OF NOVELTY

This session's interactive elements will create a novel and thought-provoking experience for our participants. Through teamwork roleplay, participants will directly experience the

impact of considering the 4 processes both as a team member and as a facilitator. Participants will also reflect on their current instructional and personal practices and will have the opportunity to discuss specific strategies for moving forward. This session will be a very practice-oriented – participants' take away will include concrete strategies they can use when interacting with their students and in their own teamwork.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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#### REFERENCES

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