Transcript - Dr. Elizabeth Yost Hammer:
Advice on the importance of a course overview and introduction

Hi, Elizabeth here. In this module I want to talk about the importance of setting up a clear organized and student-friendly overview and introduction to your course. One of the hallmarks of a poorly designed online course is that when students log on they say to themselves, "How do I get started?", "What do I even need to do?

In this module, we're going to give you some tips and guidelines so that this never happens to your students. Sarah Sutherland, in 2014, blogged about two important reasons why you need an introduction to your online course. First you need to establish a connection with your students. Especially with the courses that we teach here at Xavier, students need to know that there's an actual human professor on the other side of the computer that cares about them and cares about their success. It's that kind of humanized experience that's going to distinguish our #LearnEverywhereXULA courses. Just as in your face-to-face courses, your online course should show some of your personality.

Second, Sutherland emphasizes that your overview and introduction should clearly lay out all the requirements for your course. Research in the scholarship of teaching and learning, including some data gathered right here at Xavier, shows that the number one thing students want on the first day of a class is to know clearly what is expected of them. What do they need to do this semester to earn the grade that they want? In this way, consider your online course introduction as you would your first day of class and make sure that students know all the requirements for success in your course.

Later in this module we're going to explore a variety of ways to introduce your course to students using Brightspace. For example, you can do this is a welcome video, get started here module, or you could use Brightspace's overview feature, or better yet use a combination of these. In fact, we tried to model for you a thorough course overview and introduction in our get started here module for this course. Of course the important components of your course, such as your assignments and your assessments, should be driven by and aligned with thoughtful solid learning objectives, but that's the topic for the next module (module two). So for now, think about ways you can make your course as welcoming, human, clear, transparent, and organized as possible.