

# Building Inclusive Engagement in Higher Education: A Butler University Impact Story

## Focus Areas

- Engagement in lecture-heavy courses
- Inclusive classroom culture
- Immediate feedback in a large section

## From Lecture Hall to Learning Community

Ashlee Tietje, an undergraduate biology education professor at Butler University, knew that teaching a lecture-heavy course of nearly 50 students came with challenges. “My biggest thing is trying to keep students engaged during a lecture,” she explained. “I have a lot of content to get through during a short period of time.”

Her teaching philosophy has always balanced structure with heart .

“If I could be any teacher, I’d be an amalgamation of Ms. Frizzle and Miss

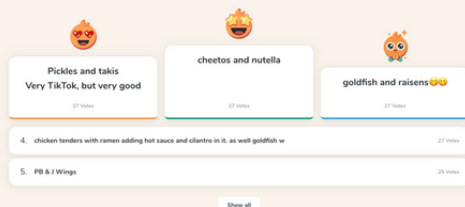
Honey,” she said. But even with nearly two decades of experience, she wanted to keep finding new ways to make sure every student in her classroom participated, felt included, and had their voice heard.

The turning point came after a campus panel on inclusive teaching, where students shared ideas about building classrooms where everyone is seen and heard. They suggested interactive polling — a small spark that set Ashlee on a path to discover Curipod. **What she found went far beyond polls. It gave her the tools to transform her lecture hall into a true learning community.**



**Ashlee Tietje,**  
Undergraduate Biology Education  
Professoring Community

### What’s the most bizarre food...



### Sketch a pair of duplicated homologous...



## Beyond Polling: Active Learning at Scale

For Ashlee, Curipod quickly became more than just a polling tool. It transformed the rhythm of her lectures, giving students a voice from the very start. Each class began with a lighthearted question of the day—sometimes a poll, sometimes a drawing challenge—and students eagerly voted on their favorites.

“At the beginning of class, we have a question of the day... a poll... or a drawing question... then we voted on the best pictures,” she explained. What started as an icebreaker soon set the tone for inclusion and interaction.



Curipod didn't just help build community. It gave Ashlee a way to **check for understanding at scale** in her 50-student lectures.

"With a class of about 40 some students, I can't directly respond to every single student," she said. "AI feedback can give them an idea of where they are and what they need to work on." Suddenly, students who might have stayed silent in the back row had a way to participate, receive feedback, and adjust their thinking in real time.

Most importantly, it ensured that every student had a place in the classroom.

"Curipod... helped make sure my lessons are engaging and making sure everyone is involved and participating in class and feel like they have a place." That sense of belonging only deepened when Ashlee used Curipod for community-building activities, like a prompt asking students to compliment one another. "Everybody in the class got to see everybody's compliments," she shared. "That family dynamic is what we're going for."

## Higher Engagement in Higher Education

Ashlee reports that Curipod has "really changed how I teach this past year." Students who once passively listened in a lecture now actively contribute through polls, drawings, and interactive tasks.

“

"It engages students," says Ashlee "on the intellectual side and the content side, in developing inclusion, and building that family."

Student course evaluations confirmed the difference. Many noted that Curipod supported their learning and even "boosted their mood." Ashlee's evaluations reflected consistently high scores, particularly in student engagement and feeling respected.

Curipod even brought joy into complex biology lessons. From labeling DNA structures to debating polypeptide models, students weren't just memorizing—they were learning together, out loud.

### Benefits of Incorporating Curipod at Butler:

- ✓ Boosted student mood
- ✓ Provided intellectual engagement
- ✓ Developed Inclusion
- ✓ Improved participation