

Online Faculty Teaching, Novice to Expert:  
Effective Practices for the Student Learner



**Online Teaching Faculty, Novice to Expert:  
Effective Practices for the Student Learner**

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## Chapter 1: What's In It For Me: Why Should I Consider Teaching Online

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Hewitt, Lashley, Mullen and Davis (2012) described online teaching and the changes it brings to our teaching:

In our professional development as faculty colleagues we are not talking about the minor changes and adjustments that one makes to one's courses to enable them to 'go live.' Instead, we have tried to evoke a sense of a major change in the way the game itself is being played. Analogous to this phenomenon is that while the Wright brothers could be identified as the initial breakthrough in flying, the collective that enabled jet flight is not as readily known or remembered. In our genuine interdependence as teaching faculty, we are not striving to be the first wave of change—the Wright Brothers. Our goal is not to fly a few hundred feet across the sand dunes at Kitty Hawk. Instead, we want to be at the wave of innovation where air travel is the norm. We imagine transporting our students from one destination to another smoothly and effectively so they can transact the business of transforming [higher education] to become just, equitable, democratic, and innovative centers... (Harris, 2012, p. 72)

Further, Harris (2012) described this new game changer setting for faculty online teachers as:

not...to leave a legacy, but to live a legacy...This means that while we lead in life-long learning we must live the process of continued interrogation to find ways to respond to technology with balance, establish covenant communities, and nurture professional relationships in ways that nourish the human capacity in a time when human touch is so needed. (Harris, 2012, p. 72)

As of 2013, 84.5% of all American households have internet capability (File & Ryan, 2014). Smith (2015) in a Pew Research Center report calculates that 2/3 of all adults in the U.S. own a smart phone, "up from 35% in the spring of 2011" (p. 1). She further noted that "7% of Americans own a smartphone but have *neither* traditional broadband service at home, *nor* easily available alternatives for going online other than their cell phone" (Smith, 2015, p.1).

Weber and Farmer (2012) remind us that other researchers since 1997 have echoed the need for student's to be in an online classroom critically must feel a sense of belonging (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson's, 1997: Herbert, 2006). The revisiting of adult learning theories is noted by Papa (2015) and Papa & Papa, (2011; 2012). They describe that student attention and motivation, "how the learner approaches learning" (p. 82), are critical to how faculty approach online instruction strategies. All faculty should "aspire to be great teachers that inspire learners" (Papa, & Papa, 2012, p. 88) to learn.

Effective teaching online follows the same models of effective teaching in the live classroom. Over the past 40 years, the consistency of dimensions identified for effective teaching range from eight dimensions to as few as three dimensions (Brown, 1977). The three dimensions include personal warmth (how well the instructor relates to the learner), academic rigor (the integrity of the material under consideration) and instructional skill (how well the materials is presented, e.g., organizations, evaluation, etc.).

Similar, but expanded to seven principles, Chickering and Gamson (1987, March) noted good practices in undergraduate education. These principles are certainly applicable to online teaching and should be considered as one develops their online class. For each principle, Chickering and Ehrman (1996) later provided how technology can play a role in implementation:

1. *Encourages contacts between students and faculty:*  
Technologies in terms of communication can enhance the contact among students and faculty. Sharing of ideas, presenting e resources and answering questions on an as needed basis are critical for communication. This communication enhances the learning whether as an adjunct to face to face classes or in all online or hybrid classes.
2. *Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students:*  
In addition to the communication described above, student interaction via technology can also be enhanced. Group work, blogs, and discussion boards are a clear advantage for increasing communication among students.

3. *Uses active learning techniques:*  
Computer simulations are so plentiful today that active learning is completely supported. As well, the mass array of information and ‘how to’ sites provide useful information and problem solving tools for students.
4. *Gives prompt feedback:*  
Opportunities for feedback come in the obvious forms such as email and drop box feedback. Not as obvious are technological options such as the tracking function in WORD to provide targeted feedback to writing.
5. *Emphasizes time on task:*  
Strategies must be included by instructors to enhance the learning experience of students. Online calendars, direct access to online resources and access to online libraries aide in student efficiencies.
6. *Communicates high expectations:*  
Higher expectations can be encouraged if students know that others (teacher, classmates, web viewers, etc. will see their work. As well, instructors can put examples of excellent work models for student consumption and emulation.
7. *Respects diverse talents and ways of learning:*  
Because technology allows for multiple avenues of presentation (e.g., written, visual and auditory) diverse learning styles can be accommodated. If the same technologies can be used for student response, diverse talents can be demonstrated. (See Chickering & Ehrman, 1996, pp. 3-6)

As will be presented in the chapters that follow, effective online teaching is simply utilizing effective technology applications just as utilizing overheads, Q and A sessions and group work is to face to face teaching. Good online teaching shifts the focus from presenting information to connecting the information to application. A mistake often made is to think presenting information is teaching and having information is learning. Search engines make access to information extremely easy. However, that information is often at the lowest levels of learning. Armstrong (n.d.), indicates (updating Benjamin Blooms original taxonomy) that information and recall are the basic, lower order areas of learning. The ability to apply, analyze, evaluate and create (in that order) are necessary for true learning to take place.

## Learning Theories and Online Teaching

Papa's (2015) research into adult learning, andragogy, found that emotion and cognition go hand in hand for the adult learner. Technology, online learning, social media, smart watches, etc. are not going away. Transitioning from live face-to-face teaching is a cognitive decision that must be matched with the emotional. Apprehension and frustration of the tools of today's classrooms is understandable, especially if you began your university career teaching live with students in front of you. It can be a significant cognitive shift to visualize the virtual classroom as similar to teaching live students. Online students are all different, just as you find in live classrooms. Online students have different learning styles, just as you find with live ones. Your ability to teach and adjust becomes a matter of not just thinking about your content but understanding that the tools raise complex but adjustable issues for you to solve. Acknowledging you are the *learner* with the digital tools frees us to be curious about how to mesh your discipline specific content with the tools available.

Gardner (1985) explains cognition as the "efforts to explain human knowledge" (p. 6). Accordingly, Brunig, Schraw and Norby (2011) added to the definition of cognition the actions of "thought and memory" (p. 1). Vygotsky's theory of social mediated learning (1997; 1978) is a theory that lends itself to content specific scaffolding from the expert/mentor to the novice. Bandura (2006) notable social cognitive theory states "most human functioning is socially situated" (p. 165). See Table 1:1 for learning theories along a timeline of theory development (Papa & Papa, 2011).

**Table 1.1 Learning Theories and Timeline of Theory Development**

### **Behaviorism**

Watson (1900–1930) and Skinner (1940-1980) Behaviorism: The study of objective behavior and learning as response to positive or negative stimuli.

## **Cognitive Constructivism**

Freud (1880+) & Erikson (1959+): Stages of the Life Cycle included adult development beyond adolescence. Erikson took Freud's work that ended with adolescence and developed theory that reached to old age.

Piaget and Cognitive Constructivism (1920+): Four stages of development: final stage Formal Operations (ages 11-15) assumes this age reaches adult cognition and conceptual reasoning abilities. Knowledge is constructed through individual experiences.

Bruner (1950+): A founding father of constructivism which found that learners construct ideas based upon previous learned knowledge

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1965+): Learning occurs both cognitively (knowledge) and affectively (beliefs, values and attitudes).

Lave (1990+) & Wenger's (1999+) Communities of Practice: Situated learning and engagement in communities of practice for adults is the focus of their theory.

### **Social Constructivism (learning occurs first on a social level)**

Vygotsky and Social Cognition (1920+): Development of the individual occurs on first a social level and later on an individual level. The potential for development occurs when children participate in social behavior. This is called the Zone of Proximal Development.

Bandura's Observational Learning (1960+): Operant view of learning that is comprised of four steps: attention, retention, reproduction and motivation.

### **Humanist (learning occurs at the personal level)**

Maslow (1930+): Experiential learning with an emphasis on choice, creativity, values, self-realization and dignity.

Rogers (1960+): Inclusion of feelings and emotions in learning. Learning occurs at a personal level.

### **Motivation**

Dewey (1930+): Experiential learning leads us to more learning.

Glasser Control Theory (1990+): The theory of motivation and what a person wants most at any given time. Choice is at the heart of this theory.

Brown Locus of Control (LOC) (1980+): Internal and external locus of control factors that influence how we view ourselves and others.

Gilligan (1980+): Feminist voice given to adult learning and cognition.

Levinson (1970- ): Male and female adult life stages identified.

### **Intelligence (multiple attributes to defining creativity)**

Guilford's Structure of Intellect (1950-1980): The intellect is comprised of operations, contents and products, with a focus on creative abilities.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (1980+): Individuals possess distinct forms of intelligences in varying degrees.

### **Adult Learning and Pedagogy**

Knowles (1970+): Founding father of adult learning views learning as cyclical: experience leads to reflection that leads to action which leads to concrete reflection, and so on. Andragogy refers to adult learning vs. pedagogy that focuses on children.

Cronbach & Snow Attitude Treatment Interaction (1970+): Learning is best achieved when strategies are geared directly to the learner's specific abilities.

Cross (1970+): Adults as learner's model (CAL) views learning as lifelong

Freire (1970+): The critical analysis of experience and acting on that analysis leads to more learning.

Reprint from Papa, R. & Papa, J. (2011). Leading adult learners: Preparing future leaders and professional development of those they lead, pp. 91-107. In R. Papa (Ed.) *Technology leadership for school improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

These learning theories should help to guide you through your learning style, which will shape how you prepare your content through the lens of multi-media tools.

Educational technologists have yet to identify how multimedia tools can best be used to engage, motivate and expand human learning. The exponential growth of technology tools in combination with the internet have 21<sup>st</sup> learning theorists still trying to make sense of where we are in explaining how we teach and learn. Learning today can be personalized visually, audibly and within simulations and is embedded in ones learning through activity. (Papa, 2015, p. 5)

The disruption to the non-digital native reflects the confusing changes at universities. With the advent of multiple delivery modes, we are expected to embrace, to the dissonance in university mission, policies, and practices, the reality that the myriad ways of knowing have exploded. Unfortunately, we as university teachers are caught within the cataclysmic change with the snail pace university policies and departmental procedures change. Equally, the reticence of some faculty to these changes can have enormous impacts: for example, insisting a master's program in a professional discipline can have all but one course be online, is intended dysfunction that can cost the department and university from ensures loss of students and possibly threaten the life of the degree program.

So, what can you do to prepare yourself of not only online delivery, but ensure your students are as passionately cared for as they

are or have been when you are sharing the same space at the same time? Understanding cognition, emotion, learning theories are part of it. Jenlink (2013) explains *situated* cognition as:

The focus is on assisting the learner to move from novice to more capable and independent expert, a person who learns to use their expertise, intuition, and deep understanding to solve problems of their choosing. This requires authentic experiences with opportunities to examine ideas, develop underlying concepts, and engage in activities to successfully complete a learning experience. (p. 186)

Papa (2015) believes that using the tools appropriately, that is appropriate to the discipline content, is required. Learning what is being used in your discipline is necessary so you can pick and choose from among all the various tools, such as, mobile apps, B.Y.O.T (bring your own technology), flipped classrooms, MOOCs (massive, open online courses), etc.

We are also being data mined by all of the EMOs (Educational Management Organizations) that are privatizing our policies and procedures at universities. Software creation which is not necessarily institutive to your universities or departments culture are in massive use now, as is data mining that the university has agreed to do. As Papa (2015) noted,

Clearly, the role of the university is being tested as never before. Are universities to prepare students ala factories as only disseminators of job skills? What type of cognitive development do universities as institutions of knowledge generation undergo? Where is online education taking the traditional university that began the 21<sup>st</sup> Century yet already feels outdated? In this infancy known as the dissonant innovator of multimedia, social media, and MOOCs, most of the discussions today are framed around the technology itself. (p. 13)



## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Part 1. Reflect on your experiences as a learner. Does a favorite teacher come to mind for you? What did that favorite teacher do that you especially liked? Why do you think this teacher's instructional methods especially connected with you?

Part 2. Reflect on your experiences in teaching. What teaching strategies work especially well for you? How are they effective?

Part 3. Now reflect on a situation where you were asked to implement a change in your teaching. What was your reaction? How did you assess this change: as a potential positive? Or did you resist the change? How did you feel when you actually tried the new teaching method? Did your reaction change as well? How did it work?

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Part 1. Locate five published articles about online teaching and learning. Identify the purpose of each study. What was the online curricular method being implemented? How effective was it?

Part 2. For each of the above five articles, identify one way you might directly use or adapt its methods to your own teaching. What would you do in the same way as in the article? Is there anything you might modify to better fit the needs of your students? If so, how?

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Part 1. Select three current curricular activities you currently implement in your traditional face-to-face teaching. Which learning style models best align with your current teaching methods?

Analyze their applicability and relevance.

Part 2. Now select one form of technology that could be used with each of your identified curricular activities above. Analyze its potential applicability to this teaching activity. How might you adapt the teaching activity to incorporate this form of technology? How does this application fit with the learning theories and models you aligned to this learning activity in Part 1?

## Chapter 2: Getting Ready to Teach Effectively Online

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It has been consistently shown in the research on effective teaching and learning that student engagement is a positive correlate to learning outcomes (Johnston, Beaudoin, Jones & Waggett, April-June, 2015). The article continues by pointing out that engagement or more than keeping busy. Their definition is engagement is the “involvement, interest and connectiveness learners have with their courses, one another...” (p. 90). Online instructors need to use caution in only utilizing the online management system’s metrics of how often student log on, and for how long they are online, etc. These metrics measures are only the beginning of engagement.

For the online environment, engagement translates to having students actively involved in the material and projects being covered. One avenue for online engagement is often the discussion board aspect on management system. A typical assignment is for the instructor to post a prompt, ask each student to respond and also have each student respond to the post of one or two of their classmates.

However, for the discussion to be truly effective, students need guidance so they do more than simply superficially respond to an online post. The original post needs to be structured so that the student provides detail as to why they responded in a certain way. For example, if the prompt says to react to a quote regarding the topic at hand, guidelines should include, for example, be sure to state at least two reasons for your answer using examples from your studies and/or references. The same guidelines need to be stated to direct their response to a classmate. In this way there is engagement rather than simply participation. Thus, the instructor can assess engagement by the detail provide in the original response and the response to another.

As well, all assignments need to involve the assessment of engagement. Learners need to be aware that the assessment will differentiate what the article refers to as levels of engagement. Three of the levels of engagement, for purpose of this book, include “minimal compliance” (Johnston, et al., p. 91), meeting minimal requirements, “strategic compliance” (Ibid), which is compliance for

sake of the grade, and “true engagement” (Ibid), making the assignment personally meaningful.

In general, engagement is an incredibly salient aspect of designing online assignments. Instruction and assignments that engage students lead to increased learning outcomes.

Continuing with this line of thought, Denzine and Brown (2015) suggest that a key motivation theory that can be said to apply to the online environment is that of self-regulated learning. Learners who are self-regulated (SRL) use both motivation and learning strategies.

As teachers experience every day, students differ in the extent to which they behaviorally, meta-cognitively, and motivationally participate in their own learning. A self-regulated learner is defined as a student who deliberately generates his or her own thoughts, feelings, and actions to achieve his or her learning goals (Denzine & Brown, 2015, p. 22).

As a part of SRL, students utilize such skills as setting goals, self-reflection and self-evaluation. These involve specific strategies that are particularly salient in the online environment such as study skills, time-management skills, and organizational strategies.

As was also noted in this chapter, engagement plays an important role in learning. Thus, the degree to which an assignment is found to important and related to prior experience is critical to the SRL. Indeed, students who were more interested in the reading materials were able to process at a deeper level and utilized more elaborate learning strategies. By arranging for assignments, discussions and projects to be directly applicable to a wide variety of online respondents, enhances SRL and thus successful completion of learning objectives.

It has been found that SRL skills can be directly taught. Online teachers need to model SRL in terms of their assignments and especially in terms of feedback. Modeling means asking students to divulge their interests and prior experience so that assignments can reflect such. Appropriate feedback recognizing interest and experiences tells students that they are on the right track to SRL.

Rosales (2011) emphasizes that all syllabi for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning need to be digital. What this means that syllabi whether for online or face to face courses, need to include digital approaches to learning. Examples given include ‘open courseware’ to supplement traditional textbooks. Tools include data bases, open-access journals,

etc. and course materials should include live web links. Collaborative learning needs to be stressed with appropriate digital tools such as discussion boards, wikis, etc.

Rosales goes on to say that access to digital materials should be easily accessed and students encouraged to learn on their own. Many topics are demonstrated or explained are on You Tube and sites such as the Khan Academy. This will require the instructor to preview materials and provide links that are worthy of viewing.

## **The Teaching Strategies Tool Kit**

To teach effectively online requires a revision to live teaching classroom strategies. Papa (2011) states the necessity of expanding our personal teaching strategies for the online environment by understanding the following:

It is often said that if all you have in your toolkit is a hammer, then everything in the world looks like a nail. Adult learning practices tell us that adults learn on a need-to-know basis: the adult learner has a focused need to learn something and that something is the exact place to start. No one size fits all learners. (p. 36).

University professors know their discipline specific content. Teaching online must involve, “different teaching strategies utilizing tools that make sense for the learner” (Papa, 2011, *ibid*). Teaching faculty that facilitate an active student learning environment is the goal.

## **Summary Checklist: What Should You Be Aware Of?**

- Students may inappropriately generalize the characteristics of the face-to-face classroom to the online classroom, particularly for their first online class.
- Students may assume that the online classroom is “less work,” and therefore requires less engagement than the traditional face-to-face class.
- Students may also over-commit themselves to too many classes at once, based on the above assumption. This in turn may restrict their ability to engage at sufficient levels in each course.

- Students may apply poor or inappropriate study skills to their online learning activities: e.g., skimming a web page equals “studying” that material.
- Students may feel a sense of isolation in the online classroom unless the instructor continually makes his or her presence known.
- Students may be reluctant to ask a question they may have, based on this perceived sense of isolation.
- Students may need additional outreach, particularly at the start of the course, to encourage them to actively participate (e.g., email, telephone call, invitation to visit during office hours).
- Students may need coaching on how to make substantive discussion response posts beyond ‘I agree’ or ‘Good job.’
- Students may need additional examples of learning concepts and applications of those learning concepts in the online classroom.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Locate a syllabus for a course that you currently teach face to face. Identify five parts of this syllabus you would need to modify if this course were modified for online delivery. Rewrite these parts of your syllabus, with particular emphasis on encouraging student engagement in the new online format for your course.

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Suppose you are teaching an online course. One of your learners has disappeared from the course after the first week. You check with the registrar and see that the student has not yet dropped your course, despite his/her lack of attendance.

What will you do in this situation? Draft a detailed plan for your outreach to your student. How will you contact this student? What will you say to encourage your student to actively re-engage in your course?

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Search the literature on the topic of study skills. Identify and apply five best practices of study skills to the outline of a preparatory learning module to orient your incoming online students on how to effectively study online learning materials. What topics will you cover in such an effective online study skills tutorial? What learning activities will you include? How will you assess your students' applied understanding of effective online study skills?

## Chapter 3: Harnessing the Best of Multimedia Tools to Teach Effectively Online

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Some of the mistakes that are often made is to let the technology drive the content. Just because you can, doesn't mean you have to include all the bells and whistles that are available. It is important to let your learning objectives define what applications you will use.

Bart (2011) makes the case that technology can meet the goals of learner centered teaching. Structuring the objectives of the content with helpful technology can lead to a more engaged learner. The goals of learner centered learning and technology ideas are present below:

1. Assignments that are interactive in nature will allow students to master material at a pace for which they are comfortable. These technologies include blogs, discussions boards, wikis, etc.
2. Organization of content in a logical and structured way assist in lessening confusion. Certainly, an online syllabus is critical accompanied by an assignment page with key dates and a discussion board item that students are asked to check frequently for course updates.
3. Teaching is in part the facilitation of learning experiences. Online assignments with frequent feedback, use of discussion boards to facilitate questions and answers and period feedback from students regarding the class are very useful. As with face to face teaching/learning, busy work and repetition are not encouraged.
4. Learner centered responsibility is a critical component of the online environment. Assignments need to be created that allow students to interact with the material. Posting where students display their thoughts and response by classmates to those thoughts can be helpful.
5. Evaluation of student work needs to be on-going, specific and often. Whether through peer review opportunities online or teacher feedback, online platforms can help.

## **What Does Multimedia Consist Of?**

Given the rapid changes in technology, a full description of available multimedia is beyond the scope of this chapter. In general, it consists of various forms of audio and video that you can add to your online classroom content.

Here are just a few of the things you can do:

- Create an audio and video welcome message for your students,
- Add a voice clip to accompany your returned feedback on assignments,
- Create an audio or video clip to walk your students through a particular operation or set of steps on the computer,
- Create visual flow charts of processes, with or without animation,
- Interact with your students in a live classroom chat session, including the ability for you and your students to write on a virtual chalkboard and exchange files in the live classroom,
- Send students on virtual tours during a live classroom session, where they click a link to access a reading or video and then return to your live classroom to discuss what they have seen,
- Conduct polls in your live classroom, where you pose a question to your students and have them vote anonymously with a set of response choices you have shared with them. You can receive a tally of responses in seconds that can be shared with your students.

You can learn more about multimedia applications at the following link: <https://www.reference.com/technology/examples-multimedia-applications-3c863a740a8b3fb1>

## **What Should You Be Aware of with Regard to Multimedia?**

Be aware of the capabilities of your online learning management system (LMS). Examples of such currently prevalent LMSs include Blackboard, D2L (Desire to Learn) and Canvas. Does your school's tech support department offer tutorials for faculty on how to use all of



the features of this LMS? Are there advanced and refresher tutorials available based on upgrades and enhancements to the system? It is well worth spending some time with these materials so that you are aware of what you can and can't do within the structure of your online classroom.

Don't automatically resist a change to this LMS. Many schools upgrade them regularly. A natural instinctive reaction is to fall back on the tried and true. Give the new system a chance. You may be pleasantly surprised at how it is not only more effective, but easier to learn than you think (and your students may feel the same way, too!)

Along these lines, test the waters by committing to applying one new techno-tool to your course each term. This is a great way to ease into new technology applications, and also keep your courses current.

Use professional conferences as an opportunity to check out the best of new technology. Vendors will have booths at the conference where you can road-test the new materials. It's an excellent opportunity to ask questions of the vendor and compare several new techno-tools at once. Share your teaching area with the vendor and ask for ideas on how the new methodology can be applied to your online teaching.

Ask your students themselves what forms of multimedia they regularly use. Students are likely to be on top of new trends in technology. Their suggestions may give you great ideas on what to incorporate into your online curricular design.

Have support services readily available, for both you and your students. New techno-tools may still be somewhat buggy upon initial release. Students may be working on older computers that are not compatible with newer technologies. Find out the toll-free number and hours of operation of your school's tech support, and share them with students. Is there also a lab where locally based students can walk in for hands-on help under the guidance of a lab aide? Planning ahead for this safety net of support will help you deal with the familiar 'Help!!' email message from your students when trying out the technology.

Model a positive can-do attitude for your students with your own use of multimedia. Let them see you fail...and gracefully recover from it! This will show your students that 1) techno-glitches happen,

2) there is almost always a way to recover from those glitches with determination, patience and expert help.

### **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

#### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Locate an example of a video on a topic related to your area of online teaching. Analyze this video in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. Would you envision using this video with your own students? If so, how?

#### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Contact the tech support department of your school and ask them what specific multimedia they recommend for the online course that you teach. Select one of these tools and draft a sample online assignment or other learning activity that directly incorporates its use.

#### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Record a welcome message for your students using an audio/video tool of your choice and that is compatible with your school's online software. Incorporate any additional visuals you would like to include, in addition to your image and voice. Share it with a faculty colleague for his/her evaluation.

## Chapter 4: Harnessing the Power of Social Media to Teach Effectively Online

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Wasik (2015) wrote that digital imperialism is supported and sought by those digital giants in Silicon Valley. These giants within their corporate culture believe and act on the notion that technology spreads values. He noted that “as of 2013 eight of the world’s top 10 internet companies by audience were based in the United States, though 81% of their online visitors were not” (p. 18). He continued, the question is not whether the spread of technology is promulgating, as Hollywood once did, an American vision of what the world should be. Rather, the question is how the rest of the world will respond” (p. 18). As the Facebook manifesto states, Facebook was “built to accomplish a social mission...by giving people the power to share” (Wasik, 2015, p. 18). This ultimately looks like a sharing activity, a sharing good for all. Wasik cautions that this “looks less like an imposition of American values and more like a universal social good” (p. 20).

Former imperialistic actions required and submitted less worldly nation/states to the stronger colonial actions. Today, in the digital world, Silicon Valley draws young college graduates encouraging their personal ambition for “social uplift...to design tools that spread values, as they create values—a virtuous circle for all who share their virtues” (Wasik, 2015, p. 20).

How university faculty understand this digital juggernaut is critical to ensuring teaching values are not hidden but made known before entering the online classroom.

### **Forms of Social Media**

Such social media include, but are not limited to:

- Facebook,
- Twitter,
- Instagram,
- Pinterest
- Blogs and Wikis

In addition, both the Mac and PC have software available to initiate instant messages when both parties are online. Some faculty have used such instant messaging as part of their virtual office hours.

## **Potential Uses of Social Media**

Here are just a few ways that you can incorporate social media into your online teaching:

- Create a Facebook page for your class to use and communicate in addition to a face-to-face or blended classroom interaction,
- Share additional online readings by uploading them to the class Facebook page,
- Conduct asynchronous polls using the class Facebook page,
- Encourage students to create and use additional Facebook pages for group work, and to which only you and group members have access,
- Use Twitter to send urgent updates and reminders about upcoming assignments and due dates to your students,
- Share examples of student work in visually oriented classes such as art using Instagram and Pinterest.

The possibilities for creative application of social media to online teaching are endless. At the same time, the Chapter 2 caution about novelty for its own sake is well repeated here. Not all social media should necessarily be integrated into your online course. Popularity for casual use is not automatically a criterion for inclusion in your curriculum. Just as “too many fonts (colors, enhancements, etc.) spoil the PowerPoint,” the same is true with overloading your classroom with too many applications of various social media. On the other hand, judicious integration to support your learning goals will add interest for your students, instead of overwhelming them.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Locate an example of one form of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) being used or applied in an online class. This example can come from an article or book. Analyze and evaluate the application of social media in this instructional context. Was it effective? Would you recommend any changes in the instructional application of this social media tool?

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Draft three blog or wiki discussion questions or assignments related to your online course. Be sure to include instructions for students in how to address the question or assignment in the blog or wiki. What additional guidelines will you share with your students regarding effective interaction in blogs and wikis?

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Suppose you have decided to create a Facebook page for use of your online students. Draft the blueprint of what this Facebook page will look like. What will you use it for? What links, visual inserts and supplementary materials will you include? Sketch out the design of this web page to reflect what your students will see when they log in. Be sure to include any welcome messages and instructions for your students.

## Chapter 5: Effective Curricular Development and Updates

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The tracking of individual students for online courses is referred to as ‘learning analytics’. Essentially, learning analytics provides data as to how a student experiences the online course. Such experience includes which pages they visit, in what order they visit, preferences for submitting work, etc. (Young, 2016). However, the data is just that, information that may be usable but also difficult to understand and/or interpret. For example, it may be very helpful to know that students go right into assignments without reading a general, getting started page. With that information, does it make sense to put general information on the assignment page? According to Young, some universities are developing labs/assistants to help faculty to use learning analytics.

### Guidelines for Developing Effective Online Curriculum

1. *More detail is preferable to less.* Remember that you can’t see your students and where they might be lost or confused. Err on the side of more explanation and examples, particularly with regard to complex learning concepts (math, statistics and research are just three examples).
2. *Mix it up.* Too much text will bore your students. Engage them with a variety of learning materials. Embed relevant visuals and videos into your narrative.
3. *Cluster your learning modules by subtopic.* Much like a sections in a textbook, some ideas go together naturally. Think about how you might break up your overall course curriculum into cohesive clusters of ideas. Sketch out these thoughts in the form of an outline as you design your online course. This will be a helpful organizing framework for you as you begin to draft the content of your online course.
4. *Call upon expert reinforcements.* The tech support department of your school is well worth an initial outreach as you begin to plan and draft your course. They are likely to have a faculty liaison who is well versed in curricular design. He/she will have

lots of creative ideas for you on how to transfer your instructional content effectively to your school's LMS (learning management system) in ways that will engage your students.

5. *Similarly connect with textbook publishers.* Many of them will have supplementary web-based learning activities, instructor guides and other materials to accompany your adoption of a particular textbook. As you shop around for a good textbook, ask what they have to offer in the form of companion websites. Plan to spend some time checking out the content well in advance of your ultimate course launch. That way you can make some informed decisions about what to integrate as is into your online course design, what to modify in some ways, and what not to use (or at least, not right now).
6. *Rely on a trusted outside pair of eyes.* Share your draft of your online course with other faculty who teach the same or similar content online, as well as your tech support liaison. Ask them to road-test this content and offer suggestions for improvement. What might be added, deleted, reworded or rearranged?
7. *Go to the sources.* When you launch your online course, stay alert to student feedback regarding what's working and not working. You might do a midpoint check with your students to ask them to share their reactions to the online learning materials. What's working well for them? What could be presented differently or better? You can fill in the gaps of anything that's confusing for students by continuing to seek out additional websites, videos and other learning resources while your course is still in progress. In addition, you might consider running a live chat session or webinar to provide extra coaching on those trouble-spot areas.
8. *Keep it fresh.* Consider doing what we suggested in our multimedia chapter, and adding one new thing to your course the next time you teach it. This could be a welcome video, an audio lecture explaining a challenging concept, or an animation relating to that concept, for example. Doing this adds interest to your course, for both you and your students.
9. *Get double mileage out of your curricular design experience.* Consider presenting a workshop or writing a paper based on your pilot test of your specific online curriculum. This will not

only give you a scholarly artifact for your professional record, but it will also open the door to a valuable learning and networking experience with your colleagues. Every academic area has its professional associations, most of which offer publication and presentation opportunities at the local, state and national level. Some conferences even occur in the virtual environment. This will give you an opportunity to share teaching ideas with your faculty peers, and to collect their own suggestions on how you might make your online course design even better.

10. *Above all, stay positive regarding the potential for change!* As every teacher who has taught a course for the first time in any venue knows, not everything will work. Don't get discouraged or automatically interpret it as a failure. See it instead as an opportunity to tweak what didn't work, or maybe even discard it entirely for something new and even better! The beauty of technology itself is its dynamic nature. New hardware and software developments occur constantly. So do the opportunities for curricular application of these technological innovations. At the same time, content in our respective fields continues to be updated, as well. Staying open to new ideas in both content and technology helps assure that your course will be leading-edge and provide students with up-to-the-minute skills in both process and product of what they are learning.



## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Identify three recent content developments in your subject area. Can they effectively be taught in an online classroom? Discuss their potential for online course inclusion, including any challenges in instructional delivery and student comprehension.

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Suppose you have been tasked with mentoring a first-time online instructor in your content area. This instructor is designing an online course. He/she shares the course draft with you.

You discover that:

- the course content is largely text-based,
- this instructor appears to have transferred his/her lecture notes from the live-and-in-person course directly to the LMS with little or no modification.

What will you say to this instructor? Please share specific guidelines and strategies that you will share with your faculty mentee.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Draft a learning module pertaining to a course concept that you might teach in an online course. Be sure to include the text content you will include on the web page, as well as links to supplementary related learning materials, discussion items, and assignments (individual and/or group).

## Chapter 6: Encouraging Effective Student Engagement Online

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All of us can relate to that first-day-of-class feeling. What will our new class be like? We want to be sure we understand what will be expected of us.

The online classroom may be new to some students. As such, they may not know what they will need to do in order to succeed. This is especially true of student engagement (see Chapter 2).

Being there' takes on a different form than it does in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Online students may need some coaching on what they will need to do in order to effectively engage in their classroom.

Here are some strategies you can use to encourage effective engagement on the part of your online students:

1. *Post an introductory learning activity that will require your students' active participation.* This can be as simple as creating a self-introduction discussion forum where you encourage your students to share a little bit about themselves: e.g., major area of study, professional interests, hobbies or family information. This is similar to going around the room and asking everyone to please introduce him or herself in a face-to-face classroom setting. The self-introduction post is also a discreet way to assess if students know how to access and post in discussion forums: a skill that they will need as they work through the course itself. Or you can get creative and share one of the many innovative online ice-breaker activities. Please see Joitske Hulsebosch for 10 online ice-breaker activities at <http://joitskehulsebosch.blogspot.com/2009/03/10-online-icebreakers.html>. Conrad and Donaldson (2011) are another source of effective ice-breakers. The idea is to reinforce the importance to students of "making their presence known" from Day One to develop a good habit of their continual engagement.
2. *Create some initial brief assignments due early in your course.* Most schools will expect you to report some initial measure of students' progress to them early in the term. At the authors uni-

versity Northern Arizona University, some instructors have ‘one-minute papers’ or brief learning assessments built into their course for this purpose. These mini-assessments can also take the form of standardized quizzes that are auto-scored by the learning management system.

Such brief assessments let students know how they are doing. It also reinforces the importance of regularly engaging with the course material from the very beginning.

3. *Set dual discussion participation due dates.* Many of us have experienced the flood of email messages at the end of the week from students saying, *Help! I know I'm supposed to make at least two reply posts. It's Sunday and hardly anyone has even made a first post! So I have no one to reply to! What should I do?*

You can prevent this 11<sup>th</sup>-hour SOS from students by setting your initial discussion due date earlier in the week; say, Wednesday or Thursday. You can ask students to make their own direct reply post to each discussion topic by this earlier date. Then they have the rest of the week: say, Friday through Sunday, to read their classmates’ initial postings and make their required replies.

Doing this helps ensure that everyone is on the same page: first considering their own replies to the discussion topic earlier in the week, and then replying to their classmates later in the week. Above all, it prevents student procrastination in waiting until the very last minute and very end of the week to log in and participate in the current discussion.

4. *Find creative ways to ensure that students are logging in to read posted course announcements.* Every course, whether online or face to face, will have late-breaking developments. In a live and in person course, the professor will typically make an announcement before the start of class. The online equivalent involves posting the announcement on the course home page or inside the course shell. But of course, if we post it, will students necessarily take the time to read it?

One way to discreetly encourage students to pay attention to posted announcement updates is to make it rewarding for them to do so. You might consider posting an announcement saying that if they send you an email message with “Found It” in the subject line within 48 hours of the announcement post, they will receive a

certain number of extra-credit points. This is a fun way of reminding them that it pays to read these posted announcements, and to keep checking for new announcements throughout the term. For additional strategies to promote student engagement in course information, please see Dereshiwsky (2013).

5. *Follow up with a personal outreach regarding MIA students.* Just hearing your voice at the other end of the telephone can work wonders in encouraging a missing-in-action (MIA) student to return to the fold. It instantly humanizes you to the student and allows you to convey your caring and concern that he or she has been missing from your classroom. You can use this real-time outreach to address any questions or concerns the student might have, as well as to create a mutually acceptable plan for catching up. For additional strategies to reach non-engaged students, please see Palloff and Pratt (2013). Lehman and Conceicao (2010) effectively discuss how to create a sense of online presence for your students.

To paraphrase the line from the classic movie *Field of Dreams*: if you build it, will they come? The answer is yes in the case of online courses, but we may have to work at making the destination engaging to students. By following tips such as the above, we will increase the likelihood that our online students will be present, accounted for...and genuinely engaged in the learning experience that we have created for them.

## **Points to Remember**

- Effective student engagement doesn't just happen. You need to actively model it with your own continual presence.
- Extra vigilance will be vitally important on your part to follow up with students who are not actively engaging. Err on the side of caution. If you suspect a student disconnect, assume it's true. Follow up actively with that student via a friendly email outreach or telephone call. Listen and ask questions about what might be preventing the student from actively engaging in your course. Offer

suggestions for reconnecting and helping the student get caught up.

- Post reminders about upcoming assignments, particularly major milestone assignments. You might send a tweet as well, per our suggestions in Chapter 4 on effective use of social media.
- Be aware of energy-lag periods such as the midpoint of the course and as the end of the course approaches. Consider building in some creative, engaging, fun learning activities for these lag times to reignite student interest.
- Catch students “doing something right.” Acknowledge and praise excellent work privately on assignments, and publicly via your general impressions of what students are doing very well. This can work wonders in keeping motivation and engagement levels high.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Draft an introductory post for an incoming online class explaining your expectations for student engagement. This should include expectations for logging in, discussion engagement, participation in group work, and any other specifics pertinent to your online class. It should be brief but informative regarding why student engagement is important and what you expect your students to do to document their active engagement in your course.

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Suppose you have a student who is making only brief discussion responses. For example, in response to other posts, your student doesn't post much beyond 'I agree!' or 'Good job!' Suppose you have contacted this student asking him/her to call you to discuss this discussion participation. What will you say to this student? How will you specifically coach him/her to improve in this area of discussion participation?

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Conduct a library search on student engagement in learning. Identify three theoretical or conceptual frameworks related to student engagement. Draft three related online learning activities (discussions, assignments, other activities) that directly apply these theoretical or conceptual frameworks regarding student engagement. Discuss how you will evaluate or assess these three learning activities in terms of their impact on student engagement.

## Chapter 7: Dealing Effectively with Student Issues

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The classic Boy and Girl Scout motto of ‘be prepared’ applies to all areas of life. No one likes to anticipate problems. However, being ready to recognize them when they occur, and having strategies in place to resolve them, lets us refocus on positive progress towards our goals.

In the online classroom, such preparation means understanding the types of student issues that may occur, so that we may more effectively assist our students in working through them. Such student issues typically fall into the following categories:

1. *Student frustration due to unfamiliarity with the requirements of the online classroom.* Some students may be new to online learning. As such, they may inappropriately generalize their face-to-face teaching experience to the online classroom.

A classic example is a response to a question. Students may be accustomed to raising their hands in class or walking up to you during the course break time and getting an immediate answer. As a result, when they email a question to you, they may be frustrated if you don’t reply *immediately!* Many of us can share stories of logging into our course email first thing in the morning and finding 2 or 3 or more email messages from a student sent 20-30 minutes apart since midnight, and with an increasing tone of urgency: “*I’ve been trying to reach you! Why haven’t you replied to my email?!*”

To help students gain a more realistic sense of expectations for a reply from you, you might first discuss with them the inherent trade-offs of face-to-face and online courses. You can explain that in exchange for the greater flexibility of an online class—not having to physically travel to a live-and-in-person class meeting—they are inherently trading off the immediacy of a response to their question. At the same time, you can inform them of a reasonable equivalent in the online classroom. For example, you might include a statement in your syllabus such as the following: “You can expect a reply to email message within 24-48 hours on a weekday or within 72 hours covering

part of a weekend or holiday.” This gives your students a more realistic sense of what to expect in terms of reply times.

Another, more efficient way to handle urgent student questions is to create a Questions and Answers discussion forum inside your course itself. You can explain that, just as in the face-to-face classroom, if one student asks a question, others are likely to have the same question...and they will also benefit from seeing the answer. If your experience is like mine, often you will witness another student explain something to a peer in a way that leaves you thinking, ‘Now, why didn’t I say it like that?!’ In this way, you are not only providing an efficient means of handling student questions; you are also encouraging the formation of a genuine adult learning community where everyone benefits from one another’s input. (Of course, you should also explain that any questions concerning individual students’ grades should not be shared in a public forum posting area, but should instead be emailed to you, in order to preserve students’ confidentiality.) For additional tips on addressing impatient students, written from the student’s perspective, please see ‘I Need to Hear from My Professor, and Fast!’ in Fandl and Smith (2013).

If your students are feeling frustrated because of difficulties in navigating the online classroom, you can point them to a number of sources of help. For one thing, most schools will have toll-free technical support telephone numbers that students can call to get help, often 24/7. In addition, many brick-and-mortar schools will have computer labs staffed with lab aides located on campus (including at some remote branch campuses) where students can walk in or make an appointment to practice the course room navigation skills under the watchful eye of a lab aide. If possible, you might also consider holding a live session at the start of your class and in an open-access computer lab where you have also invited a lab aide to join you. The purpose of this hands-on orientation kick-off live session is to introduce the students to the key navigational skills that will be required in our online course and to give them a chance to practice while you and the lab aide circulate to provide individual help as needed.

Most of the student frustrations in this category can be handled by directly showing students what’s expected in your online classroom, and how it differs from what they may be accustomed to in a more traditional face-to-face classroom setting.



2. *Inappropriate student postings in public forum posting areas.* We are all too familiar with the challenges of text-only communication and how it may misrepresent our tone and intent. Without visual and verbal cues, all we have is the text itself...which may come across at times as cold or misleading. Couple this issue with the often-controversial topics of discussion that we might post in order to encourage critical thinking on the part of our students, and you may have the conditions for a classic ‘flame war.’ This is where students will post increasingly heated, inflammatory and inappropriate messages to one another.

Just as in the live classroom, other students who are not directly involved in the dust-up will be watching to see how you react. And it’s important to react quickly.

One good thing to do right away is to post an announcement reminding students of the importance of courteous, respectful communication. You are not naming names, but instead simply focusing on the behavior itself. A good rule of thumb we have learned as forum moderator in a public-interest forum is: “It’s *always* OK to disagree with ideas. It’s *never* OK to attack the person who has shared those ideas’ (Forum Guidelines for Online Communication Rules, 2002-2003). Along with this alert, you should post a reminder of rules of netiquette, ideally also from your syllabus. Please see Albion’s excellent guidelines for netiquette at <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/> (Shea, 2011). You should also post a link to your school’s official code of conduct for student communications. By doing this, you are showing everyone in the class that you noticed the issue and are taking quick action to turn things around.

At the same time, you should take action to remove any seriously offensive posts. You may need the help of your school’s technical support team to do this if you do not already have editing privileges in your classroom. ‘How bad is bad?’ may be a judgment call where you could use a consultation with your department chair or dean to verify the severity of the post. Certainly obscene, threatening or discriminatory language would necessitate immediate removal. Other areas may warrant a touch-base with your chair or dean to take a look.

Finally, a private outreach to the student(s) involved is a good idea. A real-time talk would allow you the opportunity to discuss why

the post was offensive and provide coaching to the student(s) on how to express dissenting opinions more courteously and professionally in the future. For additional strategies on successfully putting out flame wars, please see Palloff and Pratt (2013).

3. *Student frustration directed at you, the professor.* This one can take multiple forms, ranging from repeated challenge of a grade received on an assignment, to increasingly disrespectful tone and content of email messages. Occasionally the student's anger at you may morph into a public posting allegedly intended to incite group anger against you for whatever reason.

Here is where a cooling-off period is absolutely essential, according to numerous sources. For an excellent description of profiles of challenging students and how to successfully communicate with them, please see Ko and Rossen (2010). Think of it this way; you will now have a golden opportunity to model what you have undoubtedly advised your students. That is: think before posting, or clicking send! As tempting as it might be to fire off an immediate reply: don't. Walk away, do something else, and revisit it only after some time has passed. This will help take the heat of emotion out of your reaction and help you respond more coolly and professionally.

When you are ready to address it, focus on the issues themselves—not any emotional 'hot button' language the student may have directed at you as part of the initial message. Is there something the student doesn't understand about the course readings, assignments or other course content? Ask the student to point you as specifically as possible to the first topic or concept where he or she is confused. Suggest resources: additional readings, tutoring services as necessary, or other ways to address the content-related source of confusion. With regard to appropriate language and tone of communication, here too you should refer the student to rules of netiquette or school code of conduct policies. It might help to build empathy if you begin this discussion by acknowledging the limitations and challenges of text-based communication in "truly saying what we mean."

Finally, the classic advice of 'just listen' can work wonders, particularly in a live-and-in-person contact (face to face, telephone). As mentioned in Chapter 6, the very fact of a real live human being at the other end may suddenly personalize the interaction for your student.

‘I’m not dealing with a cold, impersonal computer screen.’ Hearing your voice in itself can humanize the interaction and defuse any tensions. This in itself will better help you and the student focus on the issues at hand to help resolve them. Of course, here too, any threats or other severe behavior will require that you seek guidance at higher levels: e.g., your department chair or dean.

To sum up, this category of student issues can often be resolved by making your human presence known in a real-time information exchange with the student. Your listening skills, caring and professionalism will go a long way in resolving any concerns. For more practical suggestions on dealing with difficult students, please see Boettcher and Conrad (2010). Pacansky-Brock (2013) discusses the unique nature of online communication and how to reach our online students.

Problems are a fact of life, and our online classroom is no exception. How we deal with them will not only help resolve them quickly so that you and your students can focus on the learning at hand—but it can also provide a useful teachable moment as you model effective adult problem-solving for your students in your response.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Locate three articles or sets of expectations regarding online netiquette. Analyze the recommended best practices in terms of their applicability to the online classroom. Are there any expectations that are unique to online teaching and learning? Which do you think might be the most challenging to implement?

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Draft a comprehensive set of expectations for effective, courteous online interaction and communication to be shared with your online students. As part of these classroom conduct and communication guidelines, please be sure to reference your school's code of conduct policies, as well as any additional sources (e.g., netiquette resources) that you might locate. Be sure to include examples and consequences for violation.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Suppose you have a student who has been doing poorly in your online course. You have attempted to coach this student, providing detailed feedback on assignments and discussion postings, and inviting the student to follow up with you further in case of any questions. The student has not initiated further contact with you. At the same time, you are not seeing any improvement.

This morning, when you logged you're your email, you found an angry message from this student, copied to your department chair. The student has accused you of 'being no help at all' and 'clearly not interested in helping me succeed in my online course.'

What will you do in this situation? Please be specific regarding how you would follow up, with whom, and the content of any messages (email, telephone, etc.) that you would initiate.

## Chapter 8: Effective Faculty Self-Care and Continued Performance Improvement

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*If you can't prove what you want to prove, demonstrate something else and pretend that they are the same thing. In the daze that follows the collision of statistics with the human mind, hardly anybody will notice the difference. D. Huff (1954)*

### **Background on Evaluation of Instruction**

Stark and Freishtat (2014) two scholars from the University of California Berkeley, used a statistical perspective and summarized the overall use of student evaluation of instruction,

The common practice of relying on averages of student teaching evaluation scores as the primary measure of teaching effectiveness for promotion and tenure decisions should be abandoned for substantive and statistical reasons: There is strong evidence that student responses to questions of “effectiveness” do not measure teaching effectiveness. (p. 1)

They contend that if the student response rate is low then the response rates say little about teaching effectiveness. They conclude measuring teaching effectiveness reliably is not possible without the ability to randomize with years of follow-up. They concluded that one primary method is teaching observations as an essential part of assessing effective teaching.

This chapter looks at online teaching effectiveness at the university level. Many universities across the U.S. have Center's for Teaching and Learning, which in the past aided campus faculty in the establishment of effective student course evaluations. Today, with the increased privatization of public universities through EMOs (Educational Management Organizations) many universities are buying course evaluation software from private vendors without a vetting of a one-size-fits-all approach.

EMOs (education management organizations), for-profit and nonprofit company's movement that began in the 1990s to enter into public schools and universities is rapidly growing. Miron and Gu-

losino, from the National Education Policy Center in Boulder, Colorado, noted:

The 2011-2012 school year marked another year of growth in both the for-profit and nonprofit education management sectors. In the previous three years we saw some signs of slowing growth in the for-profit sector, but the changes between 2010-2011 and 2011-12, demonstrate that there is still room for growth. The nonprofit management sector's growth has been steadily growing faster than their for-profit counterparts, both in terms of new nonprofit EMOs and new managed schools. Student enrollments in all managed schools continue to grow at a rapid pace. (Miron & Gulosino, 2013, November 26, p. 1)

AERA, the American Educational Research Association recently issued a statement to its members cautioning the use of value-added models (VAM) in evaluation of educators and educator preparation programs citing "the scientific and technical limitations" (AERA, 2015, November 11, p. 1). The AERA statement spoke to the "formidable statistical and methodological issues involved in isolating either the effects of educators or teacher preparation programs from a complex set of factors that shape student performance" (p.1). EMOs are unveiling tools that claim to be sufficiently sophisticated in their use of statistical methods to be accurate, reliable and valid. The implications are clear. AERA contends this is not so. Their statement notes that, while VAM may be superior to some other models of measuring teacher impacts on student learning outcomes, "it does not mean that they are ready for use in educator or program evaluation. There are potentially serious negative consequences in the context of evaluation that can result from the use of VAM based on incomplete or flawed data, as well as from the misinterpretation or misuse of the VAM results. (AERA, 2015, p. 1)

AERA concludes that teacher observation data and peer assistance is better for formative and summative "assessments of teaching and honor teachers' due process rights" (p. 2). The AERA statement concluded with the following:

The value of high-quality, research-based evidence cannot be over-emphasized. Ultimately, only rigorously supported inferences about the quality and effectiveness of teachers, educational leaders, and preparation programs can contribute to improved student learn-

ing.” Thus, the statement also calls for substantial investment in research on VAM and on alternative methods and models of educator and educator preparation program evaluation. (AERA, 2015, November 11, p. 2)

## **Online Evaluation**

Achtemeier, Morris and Finnegan (2003, February) noted considerations university faculty and institutions of higher education should think about. This study was done with 13 institutions in Georgia which incorporated an extensive review of literature noting good practices with undergraduate online instruction. This study identified that “only 8 of the 18 principles identified [from literature] as important to teaching and learning were assessed by those evaluation instruments” (p. 10). Of concern were the missing questions that directly relate to online learning, such as, “cooperation among students and active learning” (p. 10) which are vital components for online learning. Their study further noted:

None of the course evaluations asked if the student participated in online conversations with the instructor or classmates during the course, yet online dialogue is considered an important instructional strategy for building an online learning community. Similarly, while one instrument did ask about prompt feedback in general, none of the instruments asked about prompt feedback on completed assignments, although this is explicitly defined and encouraged for the online format. (p. 10)

The absence of questions dealing specifically with the online environment suggests that many instruments used in the evaluation of online instruction were likely taken from traditional course settings and applied directly to evaluate computer-mediated instruction. Questions of reliability and validity of the conclusions are immediately asked when questions designed for one environment are used for in a different environment. This failure to construct an instrument specific to the educational environment allows much important information to escape assessment and may introduce irrelevant questions and erroneous information into the evaluation process. Educators and faculty are encouraged to develop end-of-

course evaluations specific to the online environment and course of study. The specifically designed instruments should go through an ongoing process of use and revision to acquire accurate, reliable, and useful feedback concerning online courses and instruction. Finally, such instruments should be considered only a part of a multiple-methods assessment and evaluation process for evaluating courses and faculty. (pp. 11-12)

An example of what appears to be an EMO is found in a report prepared by Jessica Wode and Jonathan Keiser, Academic Affairs, Columbia College Chicago Spring of 2011. The Columbia College of Chicago is a private nonprofit institution which in a report under the heading of *create change*, noted the opposite of findings citing literature that supports the Wode and Keiser findings based in literature regarding the validity and reliability of course evaluations that, “Researchers generally consider student evaluations of instructors to be highly reliable and at least moderately valid. Other methods of evaluation (such as evaluations by colleagues or trained observers) have not been found to be reliable and therefore not valid” (Wode & Keiser, 2011, p. 2). Based on their review of literature and conclusions that online evaluations have a lower rate of response recommend that literature supports the following: Evaluations done mid-semester and end of the semester is better; the sending of reminder notes to students and faculty about the evaluation through email and pop-ups, and offering a small incentive to students, such as giving students an iPod, are the three elements important to improving online student response rates.

With such opposing perspectives found in literature it is fair to ask if intentional confusion is sought and for what purposes?

For example, we present an online course evaluation developed by an EMO and purchased by a large public university in the U.S. For example, see Table 8:1:



**Table 8:1 Instructor Questions on a Four Point Scale:**

strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree

Topic--Organization and Explanation of Materials

1. My instructor explains difficult material clearly
2. My instructor communicates at a level that I can understand
3. My instructor makes requirements clear
4. My instructor identifies relationships between and among topics

Topic—Learning Environment

5. My instructor establishes a climate of respect
6. My instructor is available to me on matters pertaining to the course
7. My instructor respects diverse talents
8. My instructor creates an atmosphere in which ideas can be exchanged freely

Topic—Self-Regulated Learning

9. My instructor gives assignments that are stimulating to me
10. My instructor encourages me to develop new viewpoints
11. My instructor arouses my curiosity
12. My instructor stimulates my creativity

Topic—Open-Ended Instructor Question

13. Please provide any comments you wish to the instructor (e.g., what was particularly effective or what could use improvement). You may enter up to 2500 characters in this field.

Topic—General Information

14. This class is: Required Course; An Elective; I am not sure
15. What grade do you expect to earn in this course?
16. Please describe your own level of effort for this course. You may enter up to 2500 characters in this field.

These questions are limited in their applicability in assessing if the learner learned. If online teaching removes the instructor from the sage-on-the-stage, why do these questions focus on the instructor and not on collaborative assignments and peer learning. There is no as-

sessing of active learning components that research tells us should be included.

In Chapter 13 we discuss in details the strengths of online learning and the components that can lead the learner to be responsible for their learning. These components include:

1. Open courseware use of free, online materials, such as open access journals;
2. Collaboration through peer-to-peer learning through social media networks;
3. Blended learning and virtual access is asynchronous materials access;
4. Learning analytics for students to follow their progress and for faculty to make adjustments to the content based on this;
5. Face time encourages instructors to set up their courses with Skype for world-wide expert's inclusion; and,
6. DIY Learning gives students credit for do-it-yourself learning. (Rosales, 2011, p. 2)

## **Implications**

What are the implications for online evaluation of instruction in the academy for faculty? If the difficulty to access live in-person faculty evaluation by students is misused, what does that say about online instruction?

## **Faculty Self-Care and Self-Development Suggestions**

- *Take those breaks.* It's easy to become consumed with the 24/7 access that the online classroom allows. This doesn't mean you can or should be available 24/7 to your students. On the contrary; you will do a much better job for, and with, your students if you take breaks to recharge and refresh. Even most for-profit schools do not have daily participation requirements. The most frequently seen requirement is 5 days a week. If you can manage to take a day off, do it. You will return to your classroom refreshed and therefore more productive and efficient than if you worked non-stop during the week. The same

idea applies to taking breaks throughout the day. Learn to capitalize on the flexibility of instructional participation that the online classroom allows.

- *Share what you've learned.* Professional conferences are a great way to network with fellow faculty. They allow you to break through the isolation sometimes associated with online teaching. Consider writing a paper on some aspect of your online teaching and presenting it at a professional conference. Such conferences are often offered at local and regional as well as national levels. In addition, they often take place virtually; this eliminates travel time and expense. It is very rewarding to join the community of scholar-practitioners in your field, and to contribute to knowledge, through such presentation of research results regarding your online teaching. Also consider applying the feedback you will receive from the audience at your conference presentation, and repackaging it as a submission to a journal. This will gain you an even broader audience for your work. Finally, consider presenting workshops and in-services at your school or at a department meeting. You can also volunteer to mentor a prospective new online faculty member.
- *Seek out opportunities to upgrade your techno-skills.* Stay in touch with your school's tech support department regarding any workshops they might offer on various technologies that you might use in your online teaching. Doing this helps you stay current with technology developments. It will also give you ideas on keeping your online course fresh by applying what you've learned to make tweaks to your online course.
- *Don't risk getting burned out!* Burnout is a particular danger under the conditions of intense focus and isolation of online teaching. Tight timelines and continual engagement with your online classroom can exacerbate conditions for such burnout (<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>). Learn to recognize the signs of mental fatigue that can precipitate full-blown burnout. Break through your isolation and apply some of the strategies in the above URL to avoid this debilitating condition.

- *Recognize that you don't have to go it alone.* Learn to call upon sources of help such as your department chair and Dean in the case of challenging students, as discussed in Chapter 7. Similarly, reach out to your tech support department to advise you on issues of course design and implementation of various techno-tools. By doing this, you are not allowing problems to fester, draining you of valuable time and energy. Instead, you are proactively seeking support to resolve those issues so that you can productively move ahead.

According to Mary Kay Ash, “The speed of the leader is the speed of the gang” (<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marykayash125792.html>). By practicing effective self-care, you are modeling the same good habits for your online students. By continuing your own professional development, you are maximizing the value of learning as a lifelong endeavor.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Identify three professional conferences in your field. Discuss how a presentation on some aspect of online teaching and learning would fit the mission and goals of each of these conferences.

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Identify three scholarly sources on the theory and practice of burnout. Prepare a professional action plan that you as an online educator will follow to prevent burnout. This plan should include, but not necessarily be limited to, a proposed schedule or calendar of your online instructional engagement, as well as your specific plans for effective self-care.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Identify a peer-reviewed professional journal in your field. Locate and study its manuscript submission guidelines. Prepare a draft of a paper on some aspect of your online teaching, or your students' learning, for submission to this journal in accordance with its submission guidelines.

## Chapter 9: Online Teaching and Community Building in the Professoriate

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E-Learning is ubiquitous in the globalization of social media and instant communication at our finger-tips. Despite the robust assault by media conglomerates and technology tools and software development turned philanthropists, it is our place as faculty to use these tools in strategies that will help the learner learn. Our leadership as university faculty across disciplines must understand the educational teaching parameters that can improve online pedagogy. This chapter focuses on the changing strategies and practices online faculty must engage in.

Again, let's be clear: providing information is not teaching. Having access to information is not learning.

Repackaging in-person course work is not viable (Garrison, 2011). Likewise, one size-fits-all course packs sold by for-profit and non-profit private universities or business vendors (EMOs) will not work either. Significant issues for public higher education faculty becomes one of copyright when courses are designed within a software platform for the university and subsequently is made available to numerous and increasingly adjunct faculty using the course content. And, the K-12 movement of standardization has overtaken, especially colleges of education, governed by accrediting bodies both state driven or national professional organizations, to narrow the content, standardize the content, and make it easy for EMOs to create mindless course packs.

What is the role of faculty in all of this? We contend that faculty in public higher education institutions need to reassert ourselves beyond the research and scholarship we do and engage the students in our classrooms. And, we must remind ourselves to stay vigilant with for-profit EMOs pushing think tank *research* that suspiciously is self-serving to their products. As EMOs privatize public higher education institutions by outsourcing many functions, such as, student course evaluation packages, software that faculty use for their annual evaluations, student advising into a single portal with a 1-800 number speaking to non-educators about programs, full online marketers to

increase student enrollments, etc., all speaks to the narrowing role of faculty governance.

Parry (2013) discusses what he calls the dark side of technology. Several examples were given that inequality and networked technologies.

Inequality was presented in terms of a discussion of MOOCs (massive open online course). The example given was one of so called elite universities presenting MOOCs that replace course offered by lesser than elite colleges. Because the elite universities have the name and resources, they might overwhelm the online world creativity greater inequity than already may exist.

As a part of MOOCs and other online technologies, learning analytics (the data collected about users) allow tracking of likes, dislikes, what is bought, what searches are done, etc. Parry argues that such analytics allows the networked technologies potentially limit our choices by controlling exposure to all that might be available.

One aspect of community building in the professorate is that of leadership for the administration of technology. Leadership is more than simply management. It requires interacting with others while exercising influence to reach mutual goals (Brown, 2011). Brown identifies two factors that are key to the administration of technology, especially in a university and/or school district: Curricular outcomes and needs for both the teacher and the students and administrator outcomes and needs.

For the teacher, curricular needs should focus on teaching using technology, e.g., using technology tools to enhance the teaching and learning process. In Chapter 3 of this book, curricular needs utilizing technology were presented. From the student perspective, use of the technology is **not** enough. Just because a student can easily take a picture and post it to social media, is not indicative of deeper forms of learning (see Chapter 1). Can students research, produce and present?

For the administrator of technology, several factors influence decisions in this area: standardization v. heterogeneity, unit autonomy v. centralization and set performance goals v. exploration. It is essential for the administrator of technology to keep the focus on the student and the teacher/instructor rather than simply the latest technology.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level:

Locate three blogs related to some aspect of online teaching and learning. Read the blog entries for the last three months. Identify the most common themes evident in these blog entries.

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level:

Post a response to a recent blog entry in each of three blogs related to some aspect of online teaching and learning. In your response, consider how your thoughts can elicit additional discussion within the online scholarly community of the issue(s) you have raised. Be sure to substantiate your assertions with references to credible outside information sources.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level:

Formulate a position on a topic of online learning that relates to community building. Post your position as a blog entry to each of three blogs related to some aspect of online teaching and learning. In your post, consider how your thoughts can elicit additional discussion within the online scholarly community of the issue(s) you have raised. Be sure to substantiate your assertions with references to credible outside information sources.



## Chapter 10: Assisting Students with Study Skills to Learn Effectively Online

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Studying is at the heart of learning anything new. But what does it really mean to ‘study’ in the online classroom? Are study skills different from those for effective face-to-face learning?

E-books may be slowly replacing traditional textbooks; however, the related strategies for effective study are remarkably similar in many ways. The difference lies in student expectations for learning online. As we discussed in Chapter 6, some students may bring some myths and misperceptions with them to the online learning experience. They may include how to study effectively.

Here are some strategies you can use to help your students maximize their study skills in your online classroom.

1. *Skimming a web page is not equivalent to ‘studying’ its contents.* Dereshiwsky has found this is a strong student belief among first-time online students (2005). The speed of information retrieval on the Internet has fueled an unfortunate parallel belief that skimming something equals studying it.

As we know, lasting in-depth learning is not likely to stick with students under these rapid-fire skimming conditions. You can share with students about the iterative nature of true learning. We call it ‘re-think-reflect-rewrite.’ We remind students of working with traditional paper textbooks, and how it’s often necessary to read a chapter more than once...to underline, highlight, cross-reference and make notes in the margins. Along these lines, we point out to them that this is often how we get those ‘eureka,’ ‘I-get-it-now’ insights of understanding that we all live for in our learning experience. We share with students that when they reread learning material, they invariably pick up new insights that we didn’t get on the first reading, no matter how slowly and carefully we do the initial reading. It’s a trade-off: the additional time investment to keep working with the new learning material will invariably pay off in such lasting, meaningful, in-depth understanding.

2. *Guard against the ‘runaway train’ phenomenon that comes with being a ‘weekend warrior.’* Let’s face it: we all have those mega-busy weeks that are chock-full of work and family obligations. As a result, despite our best intentions, we may have to resort to being a ‘weekend warrior:’ tackling the entire weeks’ worth of course expectations in the course of a single weekend instead of breaking up the learning throughout the week.

As with classic college cramming itself, this strategy may be tolerable occasionally. At the same time, it should ideally not become a habit.

In addition to the negative effects on our health and well-being, these weekend marathon cram sessions are bound to lead to frustration instead of meaningful learning. Trying to read too much new material too quickly, especially with challenging subject matter, is likely to lead to what we call the ‘runaway train’ phenomenon. Before you know it, the words just run together on the page for you. Instead of focusing on the meaning behind those words, you are so focused on getting through the verbiage that it doesn’t carry any real meaning for you. As a result, you are likely to become overwhelmed and be tempted to give up in frustration. Compare this reaction with the one in Item 3 below:

3. *Chunk it.* Breaking up new learning material into smaller, more manageable chunks is a savvy study strategy. It lets you focus more intensely on those smaller new units of learning. As a result, you can understand them more readily, and build on them to add the next unit of learning, and the next, and the next.

Busy adult learners are likely to groan and say, ‘Easier said than done!’ But we are quick to point out: don’t we all have those unexpected small blocks of time throughout the week? A meeting might be cancelled at the last minute. Or you might find yourself in a waiting room, with a longer-than-usual delay. We tell students, *You’d be surprised at how those seemingly small blocks of time do add up if you apply them to your studies!* You can easily post a couple of discussion responses, or read a page of new learning material, or outline a draft of your homework assignment, even in a relatively small block of time. And given the portable nature of social media devices these days, it’s no trouble to bring along your tablet or laptop and have it

ready to “plug in” to your online classroom when such a gift of unexpected time presents itself to you.

We will focus more on time management skills in Chapter 11. For now, the point we want to make is that they go hand in hand with savvy strategies for continually engaging in your study activities throughout the week, instead of waiting until the last minute. By doing so, you will learn more easily, with far less stress and frustration...and far more staying power for your new learning.

4. *Make your new learning meaningful.* Your studying sessions will stick with you if you make every attempt to ground your new learning in practical real-world applications. Adult learning theory (Merriam & Bierema, 2013) tells us that our students bring considerable real-world street smarts to the table in terms of their experiences. They are more likely to hang onto what they learn in our classroom if they can anchor it to something they encounter regularly in their personal or professional lives. Ideally we will be helping them to do this by structuring the discussions and assignments in our online course to feature such real-world applications. But: it doesn't stop there. An important responsibility of an adult learner is empowerment. This means being in the driver's seat of both the process and product of their own learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Our students should be actively encouraged not just to be receivers of our created classroom content, but to also go beyond it and seek out their own additional direct applications of what they are learning. In this way, their learning will have true staying power.

5. *Ask! Just Ask!* Questions are a good thing: this is how we learn! As such, asking questions should be part of an effective study skills arsenal. The problem, particularly with online students, is that the lack of immediacy of response and face-to-face contact may deter them from letting us know if they are feeling stuck. Before you know it, the initial concern will fester to such an extent that it hampers their study productivity for the rest of a given learning unit. Or as we like to caution students: *Don't let brush fires turn into four-alarms!*

You can help prevent this bottleneck in several ways. For one thing, you can add, almost as a standard sign-off when you are returning an assignment: ‘Please let me know if you have any questions on

my feedback'. We sometimes are even more proactive in responses to an individual student on his/her question. We will directly ask *What do you think, [name]?* Or, *what additional questions do you have, [name]?* This closure point implies an expectation that the student will then follow up to answer the question; e.g., to say, *that helped a great deal; thanks!* or *I'm still feeling stuck on [X]*. If enough students are in the same boat, and confused about a given topic, we might consider holding a live session using interactive online classroom software (e.g., Google hangout or your school's learning management system live chat tool) to hold help sessions on that topic in real time.

Because we can't see their faces to scan for signs of confusion as we can in the live-and-in-person classroom, we have to become resourceful in identifying signs of student confusion and helping them to understand challenging learning material in order to maximize the results of their study sessions.

For some helpful tips on how to create a study kit as an online student, please see Fandl and Smith (2013). Means, Bakia and Murphy (2014) discuss strategies for less-prepared online students to succeed in their study activities. Aaron Johnson (2013) shares three strategies for formative feedback in the online classroom.

Learning to study effectively online will pay huge dividends to students in their personal and professional lives. Given the ubiquitous presence of the Internet in virtually all areas of human activity will enable them to search effectively for information, understand that information and apply it to make decisions or address curiosities that they might have. We can create conditions to give our students a good head start by helping them acquire and practice effective study skills in our online classroom.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Identify five particularly challenging concepts in your subject area that you would teach in your online course. What specific challenges would you anticipate that your students might face in effectively mastering these five concepts in an online classroom setting? How would you directly address these challenges with your students?

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Suppose you have an online student who seems to be struggling in your course. In talking with this student, you discover that he/she only works on the course material on weekends. When you mention the value of steady, regular engagement in the course, your student replies, “Easier said than done! I’m working full time, have a family and I’m also taking two other courses. The only chance I get to study is on Saturdays!” What will you say to this student?

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Suppose you have been tasked with drafting an online learning module on the importance of study skills for online students. Draft the outline of such a module. What learning materials and activities would you include to help students develop effective study skills for online learning?

## Chapter 11: Assisting Students with Necessary Time Management Skills to Learn Effectively Online

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Time has always been a precious commodity, but particularly in our busy multitasking day and age. This is especially true for busy adult learners who often juggle school with work and family responsibilities.

How can we help online learners make the most of their often-limited time to be successful in their studies? Here are some suggestions.

1. *Don't spread yourself too thin.* Some students, particularly those who are new to online learning, may assume that 'online' equals 'less work.' As a result, they may be tempted to overextend themselves, taking on a heavier course load than may be advisable. This tendency may be encouraged by the desire to finish school and earn their degree more quickly. Some schools may also fuel this tendency by offering tuition discounts to those students who register for excess credits.

These students soon find themselves in over their heads, with multiple course due dates often converging at the same time. Invariably they slip behind, often staying behind and feeling more and more overwhelmed. The result is our receiving a series of email messages with HELP!!!!!! In the subject line during the last week of class.

This catastrophic chain of events can be prevented by making more informed decisions when registering for courses. We should do a better job of informing students up-front regarding the time commitment that might be required for each course. We can share our syllabi with detailed information about reading, assignments, projects and other course expectations. We might also recommend that students add a margin of time to their estimates as a hedge against 'life happens' events. The idea here is not to 'scare off' students, but instead to help them better estimate the time they will need to meet the expectations of their online courses.

2. *When it comes to technology, have a Plan B ready.* At first glance, this might seem off-topic to a discussion of time management. But technology can fail without warning, and often at the most inopportune times (e.g., right before an assignment deadline). Students can save time and frustration at the vagaries of technology by having a backup plan for computer access. We suggest the following to students: Might you be able to use a backup computer just in case: 1) at a library, 2) at an Internet café, 3) a friend's, 4) relative's, 5) neighbor's or 6) co-worker's computer? Right there you have six safety net solutions in cases of a crashed computer. Having this Plan B helps prevent students from missing due dates and losing momentum on currently due assignments.

3. *Appreciate even the small gifts of time, and apply them to your schoolwork.* This idea was discussed in our chapter on study skills. Even in a typically packed schedule, sudden free blocks of time can appear. An appointment may be rescheduled or cancelled, for example.

Students can learn to switch gears and invest these unexpected blocks of time in their current online schoolwork. Carrying a tablet or notebook computer that can be pulled out at the ready to log into your online course means you can make the most of even seemingly small blocks of time. Like any investments, they can seem small in size but can yield dividends if invested wisely; in this case, a chapter read or a discussion completed.

4. *Glance ahead at the upcoming week.* Consider posting a start-of-week announcement outlining the readings, discussions, and assignments for students. Much like a week-at-a-glance calendar, this will help students effectively plan 'what's coming up and what's due' during the coming week. This type of advance planning will include allocating enough time to meet the upcoming week's course expectations.

5. *Encourage students to work ahead if they know they have a conflicting commitment coming up.* Adult learners are likely to be juggling competing work and family responsibilities, such as travel. Last-minute family and work emergencies can also come up.

You should remind students that flexibility is the hallmark of online learning. Because they don't have to commit to a fixed day, time and place to all study together, they are better able to meet multiple commitments as online students than in the face-to-face classroom format.

In exchange for this flexibility, your students should plan to work ahead if they know they have a work-related trip or family obligation coming up. Likewise, if they think they might need a little more time, you can point out to them that you are a quick email away. Instructors appreciate a courtesy notification and request for additional time made in advance, and are more likely to consent to an extension.

6. *Ask for help if you find yourself slipping behind.* Advise your students not to let a bad situation get worse. They should reach out if they find themselves slipping behind. You should consider being a bit flexible and renegotiating some deadlines with them, particularly if they have shown the responsibility and initiative to reach out and ask for help. In like manner, their advisor can also help with time management strategies (Sheehy, U.S. News and World Report, 2012) 4 Time Management Tips for Online Students:

<http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2012/01/13/4-time-management-tips-for-online-students>; (The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, n.d.) How to Be a Good Online Learner: <http://www.valrc.org/tutorials/onlinelearner/organization.htm>).

The situation may not be as hopeless as it seems. Slipping behind can be reversed with acknowledgement of the problem, diligent effort to reverse it, and proactive communication with one's instructor and advisor.

Chapter 5 of Fandl and Smith (2013) contains helpful time management tips for online students.

There never seems to be enough time to do all that we need to do. By applying strategies such as those outlined above, our online students can maximize their return on investment of the limited time that they have to apply to their studies.



## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Reflect on your own learning experiences as a student. Identify a situation where you might have faced some time-related challenges in completing currently due schoolwork. How did you respond? Could you have handled this situation differently...or even prevented it entirely?

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Locate three time-management tools or resources (books, articles, videos, etc.). Evaluate their effectiveness for use with online students. Draft a learning activity (discussion, assignment, etc.) related to your area of teaching that applies the specific recommendations of one or more of these resources.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Suppose it is the week before your semester ends. You get an email message from one of your students who has not engaged in your course since the beginning of the term despite your repeated attempts at outreach (email, phone calls, etc.).

This message from your non-engaged student has “HELP!!!!” in the subject line. In the body of the message the student tells you that:

--he/she has faced a family emergency (and does not provide details beyond that),

--he/she will have to pay back a scholarship if the final grade is a failing grade,

--he/she is about to graduate.

The student asks you if he/she can turn in all of the work for the course since the beginning during the last 2 days of the term.

What will you say to this student?

## Chapter 12: Assisting Students with Critical Thinking Skills to Learn Effectively Online

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Since 1987 the seminal understanding of *good practice* in undergraduate education was introduced by Chickering and Gamson. Their study was funded by the American Association of Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States and the Johnson Foundation, and yielded seven principles of good practice with undergraduates. The seven principles are repeated here:

1. Good practice encourages student to faculty contact;
  2. Good practice encourages cooperation among student;
  3. Good practice encourages active learning;
  4. Good practice gives prompt feedback;
  5. Good practice emphasizes time on task;
  6. Good practice communicates high expectations; and,
  7. Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.
- (1987, pp. 1-2)

These seven principles are widely used in higher education to undergird many curricular decisions as well university elements that are intentional to student learning, from entrance to matriculation.

Learner centered learning is a powerfully loaded concept and one that online learning is hoping to sell as the best way to learn. Bart (2011) believes that online classrooms while crushing the ‘sage on the stage’ traditional stand and deliver lectures, it also helps students to enter active learning. No longer can students sit in back of the classroom and not participate. In an online environment all students are expected to participate most frequently in weekly discussion or assignment postings. Bart citing Shibley from an online seminar, found that Shibley provided a roadmap for faculty wanting to link technology tools to the learner. Shibley noted five primary principles of learner-centered teaching. These five principles are:

1. Shift the balance of power toward the learner;
2. Use content to organize activities;
3. Think of teaching as facilitating learning;

4. Responsibility for learning rests with the learner; and,
5. Evaluation provides a way to foster learning. (Bart, 2011)

Shibley believes that “Technology does do a better job of keeping students on task...If it is well designed and it’s not busy work, students will spend more time on task and the assumption then, which I think has been borne out...in studies of how technology can be used in a pedagogically efficacious manner, time on task will correlate with more learning and higher test scores.” (Bart, 2011, p. 2)

What is the role of the syllabus, often the first introduction for the student to a class? Rosales (2011) notes that the syllabus offers many clues about the instructor. Rosales believes that a syllabus that offers a range of resources available online becomes a “high-tech learning system that provides a roadmap for students” (p. 1). Online resources have the potential to encourage greater collaborative learning when the syllabus is as digital as the classroom. Rosales offered six examples on what your syllabus should be loaded with:

1. Open courseware use of free, online materials, such as open access journals;
2. Collaboration through peer-to-peer learning through social media networks;
3. Blended learning and virtual access is asynchronous materials access;
4. Learning analytics for students to follow their progress and for faculty to make adjustments to the content based on these results;
5. Face time encourages instructors to set up their courses with Skype for world-wide expert’s inclusion; and,
6. DIY Learning gives students credit for do-it-yourself learning. (Rosales, 2011, p. 2)

### **Related Strategies to Employ in the Online Classroom**

Help students to realize that discussion participation should adequately reflect critical thinking skills. This means going beyond “I agree/I disagree” or ‘Great job!’ in responses to their classmates. A more recent variant of non-substantive posts is ‘Your post helped me understand... [specific learning concept].’ Coach your students to ex-

plain *why* they feel as they do. Why do they agree or disagree? How did someone's post enhance their understanding? Can they share an additional example of what is being discussed? Or an additional learning resource they have located on this topic (e.g., video, website, article, book)?

Help students understand the *evidence-based* nature of critical thinking. It means substantiating their assertions with credible outside evidence. They may need some help with online library search skills to locate outside sources of information on their topic. In addition, they may need coaching on how to critically evaluate the credibility of the information they are locating. As we know, the Internet has brought with it the ability for anyone to post anything on a web page...and sound authoritative when doing so. But how trustworthy and reliable is the information on such a web page? Provide learning activities for your students that will enable them to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources of information.

On a related note, explain to your students the distinction between *critical thinking* and *criticism*. Provide opportunities for them to evaluate their peers in both individual and group work (e.g., peer reviews of drafts of literature reviews for an end-of-course paper). Guide them in the criteria they should use when evaluating work done by their peers. Explain to them how both extremes of feedback are undesirable: 1) Saying everything looks fine, and 2) criticizing the content without providing suggestions on how to improve it.

Also explain to students that critical thinking can at times be subjective...and frankly, a bit 'messy!' In an era of standardized testing, some students can be overly conditioned to the one-right-answer, one-right-way mode of thinking. The problem is that the real world is not like that. Problems can be complex, and so can solutions. Often more than one solution is possible, with none of them being ideal, and with all of them having some inherent trade-offs (relative strengths and weaknesses). Provide opportunities for your students to practice analyzing such real-world problems and weighing the relative merits of potential solutions, both individually and in group assignments. This will give them valuable practice in making choices under conditions of uncertainty and justifying their final decision.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Select a learning concept related to the subject area you teach. Conduct a library search using your school's library resources or other data bases to which you have access, and locate five sources of literature on this learning concept. Evaluate the credibility of the information you have located, noting specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as any improvements you might make.

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Locate at least five theoretical or conceptual frameworks dealing with critical thinking. Drawing upon this literature, develop a rubric for assessing students' application of critical thinking skills to an assignment of your choice (e.g., one that you may already have in an online course you teach). What specific characteristics will you look for in assessing your students' application of critical thinking to this assignment? Be sure to align these criteria with critical thinking best practices as outlined in the literature sources you have located.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Suppose your department chair has asked you to prepare an orientation for first-time online faculty in your area. As part of such an orientation, prepare a PowerPoint presentation for these new online faculty regarding 1) the importance of critical thinking skills (drawing upon literature in this area), 2) how to teach students to apply critical thinking skills, and 3) how to effectively assess students' mastery of critical thinking abilities. Be sure to include links and references to any helpful outside resources on critical thinking that you might locate.

## Chapter 13: Effective Evaluation of Student Performance

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How am I doing?’ is a question that all students wonder about in terms of their course performance. The online classroom is no different in terms of our responsibility to provide timely and relevant evaluation feedback to our students.

Here are some strategies we can use to ensure that our feedback is meaningful to our students:

1. *Provide students with an early checkpoint of progress.* Most schools will expect you to provide your students with an initial assessment of their work early on in your course; for example, 2-3 weeks from the start date. It doesn’t have to be anything as elaborate as an exam or a paper. The idea is to give them a quick indication of their comprehension of the course material.

The online classroom has some especially efficient ways to do this. For example, you can create quizzes with fixed-choice responses that are auto-graded by your school’s Learning Management System (LMS). When you create them, you can type in short explanations of why a given fixed-choice option was correct or incorrect. These types of assessments are especially helpful in basic introductory courses where students are learning the terminology of a particular field of study.

For higher-order applications, you can create what Northern Arizona University refers to as the ‘one-minute paper.’ These assessments consist of applied exercises. Here’s an example that might be used in an introduction to educational research course: ‘Please share one example each of a descriptive, correlational, causal-comparative and experimental research study topic.’ They are quick for students to complete, equally quick for you to grade, and give students a gauge of their understanding of the relevant course concepts.

2. *Accentuate the positive.* Many students are sadly conditioned to associate ‘annotated feedback’ with ‘wrong—needs correction.’ This is unfortunate; not only does it create needless anxiety, but it deprives students of teachable-moment opportunities.

In your annotated feedback, you should seek opportunities to reinforce what your students did ‘very right’ to take advantage of such teachable moments. For instance, in the aforementioned example, you might say: ‘Great job, Jane!’ You remembered to use the term ‘relationship’ or ‘association’ in your example of a correlational research question. Doing this lets you catch the student doing something right, positively reinforcing his or her application of the learning concept.

Making such annotated comments on papers is easy with Microsoft Word’s comment feature. You can create a template of commonly used feedback, and then copy and paste it into individual papers while also tweaking it to fit the individual student.

3. *Let them see and hear you giving feedback.* Let students hear you in addition to reading your feedback. Some LMSs such as the increasingly popular Desire2Learn (D2L) let you record a brief audio clip to accompany your return of feedback on a paper or assignment. Others also allow you to record a video of yourself speaking this brief feedback. Jing (<https://www.techsmith.com/jing-features.html>) and Kaltura (<http://corp.kaltura.com/>) are two popular choices. In earlier chapters, we have discussed the inherently humanizing effect of letting students hear your voice; for example, when contacting them by telephone about a problem or concern. Similarly, students will appreciate your human touch in giving them feedback, which by nature may be inherently stressful and anxiety-producing. You can include some brief overall comments, again accentuating the positive aspects of their performance, and refer them to your more detailed annotated feedback on their papers.

4. *Make teamwork...work.* Group assignments are valuable in reinforcing the idea of peer learning communities. At the same time, the online environment may present additional challenges of coordinating group communication on assignments when students are located in different places (and often in different time zones as well).

Encourage your students to negotiate a group contract as a starting point for their team communications. Originally developed by the University of Phoenix as a Learning Team Charter (Vess, & Nelson, 1999), the idea of group contracts has morphed into wide online classroom applicability. Such contracts should include, at a minimum, how

team members will communicate, how they will divide up the work on the overall team assignment, how often they are expected to check in for updates from their teammates, whether there will be a permanent or rotating team leader, and how they will document an initial good-faith attempt to resolve any problems that may arise within the team before you step in as mediator.

How does this relate to evaluation of student progress? The contract provides an initial benchmark of allocation of responsibility for the team deliverable. In addition, you might consider adding a peer review component to the overall evaluation of the team assignment. Students may need some initial coaching on how to evaluate their peers' contributions. You can create a worksheet for this purpose, containing both rating items and open-ended opportunities to provide feedback, as some schools have done. The peer evaluation should ideally be one component of your overall assessment of the group deliverable, supplementing your instructor evaluation. Palloff and Pratt (2013) offer additional valuable strategies for successfully facilitating online group work.

5. *Give students the yardstick ahead of time.* A well-constructed rubric lets students know up front how their performance will be evaluated. You can seek out existing rubrics or choose to develop your own. The latter may be a great collaborative opportunity with your fellow online instructors, as you work together to draft, revise and validate rubrics in your mutual area of teaching. Please see Boettcher and Conrad (2010) for a variety of samples of online teaching rubrics.

6. *Follow up with second chances.* Consider holding a live chat session using your school's LMS to go over any problematic areas that many students may have missed. In addition to re-teaching these trouble spots, you can ask students to submit any questions in advance that occur to them as they go through your feedback on their assignments. Such live chat sessions can be recorded, and a link to the recording provided to those students who were unable to attend this live session.

You might also consider allowing revisions to assignments for partial credit based on your feedback. The 'track changes' option of



assignment annotation make it convenient to follow the successive revisions.

7. *Help students get ready for major assessments.* In the case of online exams or major projects, you can create links to review materials in your classroom. You can also hold a live review chat session to highlight important points and invite student questions on remaining problematic areas as they prepare for the test or paper.

For a detailed discussion on validly measuring online learning, please see Conrad and Donaldson (2011). Additional strategies on assessment and feedback are discussed in Vai and Sosulski (2016).

Let's face it: evaluation of student performance will never be a stress-free experience. At the same time, you can take some steps to humanize it and make it an affirming opportunity for positive communication between you and your online students.

## **Applied Exercises: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels**

### Applied Exercise: Beginning Level

Reflect on a situation where you received feedback as a learner yourself. Specifically, recall two types of feedback:

- an example of feedback that was sufficient and helpful,
- an example of feedback that was insufficient and not helpful.

What was especially helpful in your first example? How might the feedback you received in your second example have been improved so as to be more useful to you?

### Applied Exercise: Intermediate Level

Draft a rubric for a current online assignment in your course. Be specific regarding the evaluation criteria you will use and how you will differentiate performance in a way that is meaningful and informative to your online students.

### Applied Exercise: Advanced Level

Select a completed assignment in your online course. Record a message with your feedback on this assignment using one of the types of audio/video software discussed in this chapter. Be sure to highlight both what was done well, and how any needed improvements can be made, in a way that will be helpful to your student.

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