BLENDED LEARNING DISCUSSION –PART 4: TECHNOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES MARCH 5, 2021

Delivery Mode
Mixed in person and online

Mimic real-world room setup for remote participants prepares the students for a workforce where remote and non-remote collaboration happens synchronously.

A-la-carte
On demand approach to consuming course information can reduce the amount of time required to complete courses, providing opportunities to complete additional electives not otherwise offered due to traditional time constraints.

Students could "binge" and take more courses and potentially graduate in a shorter period.

The on-demand model allows for options such as asynchronous courses enabling students to watch the videos all at once and then take the exam, finishing the class at their own pace completely transforming the idea of the "traditional semester."

Learning online - testing on campus

Interactions
Can be focused in the following 4 ways:
- interaction between instructor and the computer;
- interaction between the student and the computer;
- communication between professor or instructor; and,
- student and interactions between students.

Provides opportunities to rethink student interactions within the class in a blended environment.

Apply technology that further enhance social communication between students not currently available in Google and Zoom.

Creative ways to identify learning outcomes.
There are some opportunities again around testing or evaluation and demonstration knowledge.

Online simulation can be a mechanism by which students can demonstrate their knowledge of a particular concept using simulation.

 "Showing what you know" using technology can help improve learning outcomes as opposed to rote memorization.

Blended Learning Discussion: Accessibility

Our group was composed of the University Chancellor, Dean, Provost, Tenured Faculty and Librarian, a very rich discussion focused on the active meaning of "tech with a conscience".

1. The Pandemic has exacerbated already existing gaps in access, our query aligns with how we fulfil our responsibility to narrow that gap. Accessibility is not just physical or technical, it is attitudinal, so we need to ensure that we are "keeping our humanity central, making judicious decisions about how tech can be used to improve the human condition for all". We discussed the idea that accessibility is not just a physical plant issue, it is equally an attitudinal issue, and we need to unpack the idea of "normative vs disabled" or rather "differently abled".

2. We discussed our brand and market image, do we have visible and invisible disabilities in our marketing materials? Have we nominated any, or enough, individuals who are champions of disability for honorary doctorates?

3. Mental Health –How can we decrease stigma, use tech to offer broader support to students, work with student groups to create digital ways for support hubs for students who, post pandemic, may have even greater issues with anxiety, depression or other mental health concerns.

4. The university experience writ large, and the important social aspects of a university experience, have changed (eg where are the digital coffee shops, concerts, places to hang out). How do we use the tech to increase social presence, a sense of belonging to Ontario Tech community, and increase "collision spaces". Students can go to open library, but are craving connection and wanting to study together.

5. Accessibility for lower SES – connecting with our south Oshawa neighbours to ensure that we facilitate a path for those individuals to a university education.

6. Accessibility for Indigenous, remote or marginalized communities. We need to find ways to reach out and use tech to connect, even in those areas that may not have infrastructure (eg northern Ontario) and work collaboratively with the community, elders, leaders, as to what tech might help them resolve local problems and issues.

7. Accessibility for Seniors –using tech to access supports both cognitively and socially.

Blended Learning Meeting March 5
Pedagogical Innovations

Break out room attendees
1.   Tess Facilitator
2.   Q
3.   Owen
4.   Michael E

Pedagogical Innovation: Opportunity to be creative; opportunity to be creative; A call to continually evolve how we approach instruction as technology, students, physical campus space, and resources continually change over time; Opportunity not to be left behind. The world is changing, and we need to change with it; challenges us to re-evaluate the ways things have ALWAYS been done, and the way we deliver content; NEW ways to integrate and work on critical thinking (at least in my program); An opportunity to become more competency-based/focused in identifying learning outcomes and degree learning objectives; A chance to continue or build on what we have discovered during the pandemic; Opportunity for more practical testing.

Issues identified on Jam board
1.   Individualized learning opportunities
2.   On-demand & ala carte learning & more competency-based learning
3.   Opportunity to be creative
4.   Integrating critical thinking
5.   Practical testing opportunities

Questions for discussion

1. How has teaching changed for the better since transitioning to online?

Student perspective: Owen
        In Nuclear Engineering, students reported increased levels of on-demand binge watching recorded lectures. This practice is not new, but it has expanded to synchronous and asynchronous platforms. The ERC classrooms are equipped with an APP called MediaSite that instructors used in F2F. Using the same APP, online instructors automatically record all the lectures, including the content, on the instructor's laptop. MediaSite automatically saves the lectures, and students can access them thru links posted in the LMS, solving the issues of using up data storage in Canvas, and as an external link, it is available for students on phones and laptops.

Tess expressed the need for this APP to be available to all faculties to improve blended learning and hybrid courses where students are either F2F or remote access. Q wondered how this would impact testing.

Blended Learning Meeting March 5
Pedagogical Innovations

Q recommended using the Perusal app - especially in accessing case studies and evaluating external sources. This APP allows for self-directed learning over and above class. There are several advantages for Perusal.

   1. With decreased TA hours, Perusal helps to mark because of its AI components. Q said it was a bit of a challenge to set up the AI to mark according to his requirements. He had to tweak until the class got it right, but now he reduces marking time.
   2. It integrates into Canvas, and students do not need to create a separate account to use it.
   3. It not only offers the opportunity for group work, but students can also individually comment on written content, images, and videos.
   4. Instructors can use break-out rooms to address detailed parts of the content with Perusal.

Tess responded that Dr. Lauricella uses Perusal in FSSH as a critical thinking tool for reading journal articles. Lauricella is conducting a training workshop on March 22.

2. How are you incorporating innovative assessment?

Owen: He and his Nuc Sci colleagues like the shift to open book and collaborative exams. EX: In a recent midterm exam, he and his roommates collaborated on the exam at their kitchen table (they are roommates). The test was a shared Google doc. The prof required collaboration information (like who worked together and how each person contributed.) The test was still timed, and Owen said that he still got 64% on the test even with the collaboration. Since his field is heavily collaborative, this is a valuable skill to learn.

Michael: Expressed concerns about retention of ideas vs. cramming for the test and collaboration. But he saw the value in trying this.

Tess & Q both do variations of this in classes already. Tess gave up exams two years ago and replaced them with weekly application exercises based on the weekly materials. Students seem to like these exercises, but it also takes about three weeks to understand the workshops are not the same as a test of memorized information. Tess has a workshop every week, and students can have the lowest two grades dropped. There are some issues where students only come into class to take the workshop (because it is the last hour of class time), but they learn quickly that they need the weekly materials to complete the exercise and the presentation slides are not enough. These applications are timed at 70 minutes with an access code to start. This ensures everyone has the same amount of time (especially if they are having technical issues), and this allows for easily adjusting times for SAS verified accommodations.

Q uses the Perusal APP to reveal the areas where students are struggling to understand. This is called the confusion log (I think). Q uses this information to start the next class.

Tess uses the responses to the application workshops as starting points in the next class.

Tess also offers four different reflection essay choices. Students sign up for their choice (each has different due dates, and topics vary.) Tess uses GOOGLE Sheets for students to self-select their choices. Each essay has a limited # of spaces, and students must choose before the end of week 2. Once students make their choices, they are 'locked into' them and the accompanying due date. This helps spread out marking workload.

We ended our session agreeing that it would be helpful to have sharing sessions across all faculties so instructors can discuss innovations.

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Blended learning Discussion March 5, 2021

- **Individualization:** Opportunity to use technology to individualize learning and accommodate individual needs; on demand learning a la carte - netflix style for binge learning; Student advising based on what type of learner a given student may be.

Focus groups with students – students love having lectures recorded so they can watch material repeatedly, they can do it on their own timeframe. Can use the material to prepare for "in-person" time.

If an in-person class is missed – there is no way to make it up…..

Students see blended as a way to accommodate different learning styles….

- Reinforcing the learning from a pre-recorded lecture in class is helpful
- Learning from other classmates to reinforce learning
- Barriers are reduced if blended format
- Asking questions can be easier (anonymity?)

From a teacher's perspective

- When students have cameras on – opportunity for people who could not get to campus typically
- Can be isolating for not having cameras on – social anxiety, increased mental health issues,
- IT support is needed
- Universal design is great but it is very very time consuming
- Small classes are more challenging because cameras are off
    o Possibly cohort effect – they are used to in class from previous years
    o Creating a culture of discussion is hard
    o When technology doesn't work
    o Overcoming the challenges with the technology

It is important to not just consider the student's experience – the Professor's experience with both online and in-person learning environments need to be considered.

Will the changes allow us to re-think the 4 months semester?

- Can other formats be made available?
- For some courses? Maybe not for others?

Different learning styles, different comfort levels

It is good for students to go outside their comfort levels…..

Trying to encourage skill

- Repetition may not be real life
    o We don't get to repeat meetings in real life
- Students don't come to class if you are recording
- Risk that students will disengage – and not come to campus

- o Reputation issue
- o Retention issue
- o Need them to come to campus
- Trying to build skills so the skills are applicable across contexts
- We are moving into a new world (e.g. individualized offices),
- The online portion will be critical to preparing our students for the future skills they will need
- Skills relate to presenting or asking questions in person

Students like individualized office hours with a professor – not having to commute for a meeting with the prof is good

Oral examinations are helpful for some classes

What we are doing right now, is not necessarily what we "Could" make it look like

Can we maximize the aspects that are going well?

How do we utilize the online environment to reinforce what we do in person?

Supposed to talk about opportunities, but what about the challenges for students with disabilities?

Need adequate infrastructure

It takes a lot of time to do well, professors don't always have the time to change completely to put it online

Can what we experimented with this year, **compliment** what we do in person? Given each course is different

- Record some portions, do some things online, but then bring them to campus for other parts

Spontaneity is missed by teaching in person. It can be more difficult to do in an online environment. Spontaneous discussion can very effective as a learning strategy.

Academic misconduct has been identified as a serious issue since moving online.

We should also consider individualized teaching in addition to individualized learning

How do we build community?

- On campus before we send them off to the blended approach?
- Is the blended approach more of an advanced approach?

Individualized learning is not limited to the online environment, it can also happen in person

Some tools are good for some things but bad at others. Electronic modes of teaching have several benefits, but also create new and interesting issues that we may or may not be able to address.

Who are we sending out to the workforce if we have so much academic misconduct going on – it's a major problem.

So, in terms of scheduling and logistics, at least one in-person, on-campus course, every two weeks. In this way, students recognize that there is an expectation.
So, the guiding principle may be that about 10% of the total pedagogical experience should be in-person and on-campus.

This view is from the perspective of thinking about the time (waking time) spent each week as a student and/or instructor.
So, if there is 30 hours of total time dedicated to learning, 3 hours should be in-person, on-campus.

How are we really accommodating students with learning disabilities?

Some students are tactile learners, visual learners, etc

We want to promote a lively campus experience

We need to differentiate ourselves from other universities in student experience so students feel a part of a community

Workforce – too many people leave campus – e.g. if profs are not coming to campus when do the students meet them or work with them? How does this affect student experience?

Faculty community is also breaking down, and it is affecting the students

So, another key aspect is for students to ask themselves, "how do I learn best and how does learning happen?"

most learning situations call upon multiple modes of learning....tactile, working in groups, individual reflection...etc.
….also listening, writing (taking notes)…

At this time, I think providing hope to the students is important. This means in person time
And I would propose embedding more flexibility in many firm and rigid aspects of our scheduling.

What is the world going to look like in 2 years?

Are we requiring different tools in different classes? What have we collectively learned?

Individualized learning is a tool worth exploring, we need to try to make the overall experience better

Student Support breakout room for blended learning discussion

Attendance: Philip Shon, Alyson King, Laura Elliot, Jacinta Obasohan, Elita Partosoedarso

Items discussed

- Communications
  - Establish expectations from the start
  - instructors respond to student emails within a much shorter time frame compared to pre-COVID
  - Instructors like virtual hours- don't want to go back to "in person" student hours post-COVID, especially female instructors whose students insist on closing the door for a one-on-one meeting.
  - Student meetings can use a variety of platforms or be conducted over the phone.
- Canvas
  - Design is important to simplify access for students
  - analytics provide a snapshot of how frequently individual students engage with various aspects of the course
- Assessments
  - Positives: increased flexibility in terms of deadlines, duration of availability, extensions are easier to get
  - Negatives: a lot of instructors have busywork (small weekly check-ins worth <5% that take up a lot of time to do) which leaves much less time to do larger "more worthwhile" assignments and student for tests
  - instructors like having assessments due on Friday midnight so everything comes down to a time crunch on one day of the week
- Content materials
  - Positives: recorded lectures allow students to access at their own convenience
  - Negatives: seemingly more work with recorded lectures, readings, minor and major assignments. Time management continues to be a factor for students.
- Overall general tone of compassion and empathy: currently do not require medical statements, thinking about continuing this practice past COVID. Taking students at their word when they say that they're going through a rough patch, with or without details.