
Volume 16, No. 4 Fall 2003

MID-WESTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER

• Official Publication of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association •



Ashland University

Ashland University

Founded in 1878, Ashland University is a private, comprehensive institution committed to challenging and supporting students intellectually, spiritually, socially, culturally and physically.

Located midway between Cleveland and Columbus off Interstate 71, Ashland University is home to 2,150 full-time, undergraduate students. Eighty-five percent of these students are from Ohio, while students also come from 27 other states and 31 countries. The University's total enrollment is 6,500 students, and this includes graduate programs in business, education and theology and the off-campus centers in Cleveland, Columbus, Massillon and Elyria.

In addition to its traditional undergraduate studies, AU offers an evening and weekend program with classes one night per week and on Saturdays; a bachelor of science in nursing degree program; a master of business administration degree program; a master of education degree program; a doctor of education degree program; master's degrees and doctorate in theology through Ashland Theological Seminary; and a bachelor's plus program for students with a non-education degree who want to teach.

Situated on a beautiful 120-plus acre campus with trees, brick walkways and flower gardens, the University's campus contains 44 modern buildings including a 55,000-square-foot Hawkins-Conard Student Center, a new College of Business and Economics Building, an Instructional Technology Center, a nine-story library, a performing arts theatre and art gallery.

Ashland University takes great pride in its philosophy of "Accent on the Individual" and offers a learning environment in which students can expect personal attention from professors and staff who genuinely care about them and their development. Professors, not graduate assistants, teach the classes and labs.

The University features a strong academic reputation, offering approximately 70 majors including toxicology/environmental science, hotel and restaurant management and radio/TV, which are unusual for an institution this size. In addition, it offers most traditional liberal arts majors as well as a wide range of majors in business and education. The education program, which offers pre-K through doctorate level courses, is one of the largest among independent and state institutions in Ohio. Academic programs are enhanced by an Honors Program, the John M. Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs and the Gill Center for Business and Economic Education.

Information for Contributors to the Mid-Western Educational Researcher

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* accepts research-based manuscripts that would appeal to a wide range of readers.

All materials submitted for publication must conform to the language, style, and format of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th ed., 2001

(available from Order Department, American Psychological Association, P.O. Box 2710, Hyattsville, MD 20784).

Four copies of the manuscript should be submitted typed double-spaced (including quotations and references) on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Only words to be italicized should be underlined. Abbreviations and acronyms should be spelled out when first mentioned. Pages should be numbered consecutively, beginning with the page after the title page. Manuscripts should be less than 20 pages long. An abstract of less than 100 words should accompany the manuscript.

The manuscript will receive blind review from at least two professionals with expertise in the area of the manuscript.

The author's name, affiliation, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address (if available), should appear on the title page only. Efforts will be made to keep the review process to less than four months.

The editors reserve the right to make minor changes in order to produce a concise and clear article.

The authors will be consulted if any major changes are necessary.

Manuscripts should be sent with a cover letter to:

James A. Salzman, *MWER* Co-Editor
Cleveland State University, Rhodes Tower Rm. 1343, 2121 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* (ISSN 1056-3997) is published quarterly by the MidWestern Educational Research Association through The Ohio State University. The Summer issue serves as the annual meeting program. Non-profit postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, with permission of the College of Education, Daryl Siedentop, Interim Dean.
POSTMASTER: Send address change to Jean W. Pierce, Dept. EPCSE, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115.

MID-WESTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER

Volume 16, Number 4 · Fall 2003

ISSN 1056-3997

Co-Editors

James A. Salzman
Cleveland State University
email: j.salzman@csuohio.edu

Jane Zaharias
Cleveland State University
email: j.zaharias@csuohio.edu

Editorial Advisory Board

Louise Fleming
Ashland University

Tom Ganser
University of Wisconsin
Whitewater

Richard Lipka
Pittsburg State University

Jackie Rickman
Western Illinois University

Ayres D'Costa
The Ohio State University

Isadore Newman
University of Akron

Anni Stinson
University of Wisconsin
Whitewater

Consulting Editors

Mary Bendixen-Noe
Managing Editor
The Ohio State University,
Newark

Gene A. Kramer
American Dental Association

Richard M. Smith

Layout and design

Judy E. Teska
JET Desktop Solutions

Online Instruction: A Positive Alternative for Master of Education Students

James Van Keuren, Ashland University

2

Transitioning to an Online Instructional Delivery System: Successes and Challenges

Ronald B. Childress and Rudy Pauley, Marshall University

7

Using Online Instruction to Deliver a Discussion-Intensive Format

Herbert W. Broda, Ashland University

13

Online Education Is Not For Everyone

*John Sikula, Ashland University and
Andrew Sikula, Sr., Marshall University Graduate College*

18

Online Instruction An Alternative Delivery System for Higher Education

Michael Wronkovich, Ashland University

21

MWER Publication Address

James A. Salzman
Cleveland State University
Rhodes Tower 1343
2121 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114
Phone: (216) 687-5048
Fax: (216) 687-5379
email: j.salzman@csuohio.edu

MWER Subscription & MWERA Membership Information

Jean W. Pierce
Dept. EPCSE
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
Phone: (815) 753-8470
Fax: (815) 753-9250
email: jeanpierce@aol.com

Online Instruction: A Positive Alternative for Master of Education Students

James Van Keuren
Ashland University

Abstract

The system of higher education like the public education system was designed to meet the needs of the industrial age and now is attempting to meet the needs of the informational age. At the higher education level, a need exists to develop new ways to deliver instruction to adult learners who are mobile and pressed for time with their jobs and families. This article will describe how this author is taking advantage of online course instruction as an alternative instructional delivery approach to meet the needs of today's adult learners. The author also used student survey information to examine online and face-to-face instructional delivery approaches.

Introduction

As the Chair of the Master of Education Program of Ashland University, I made it one of my goals to be the first professor in the College of Education to teach an online course. I taught a school finance and economics class online last fall and this past summer. Last fall I completed teaching a school building, grounds and facilities online class. I thought by teaching online courses it would enhance my professional development goals and also set an example for other faculty members to follow by using an alternative method of instructional delivery.

The system of higher education like the public education system was designed to meet the needs of the industrial age and now is shifting to meet the needs of the information age. At the higher education level, a need exists to develop new ways to deliver instruction to adults who are mobile and pressed for time with their jobs and families.

Judith Boettcher (1999) believes that institutions of higher education when approaching online learning or distance learning need to customize learning for students to make it available anytime, anywhere. She stated that "Interactive online learning is an educational philosophy for designing interactive, responsive, and valid information and learning opportunities to be delivered to learners at a time, place, and in appropriate forms convenient to learners" (Boettcher, p.1). Distance education has teachers changing from being the repository of all knowledge to being guides and mentors who help students through information made available by technology and interactive communication. In the article entitled, "Emerging Technology in Distance Learning," it was brought out that technological advances have created a paradigm shift from student-filled, single teacher-directed class to a teacher-less, boundary-less, timeless learning or schooling (Bingham, Davis and Moore, 1996).

Review of Literature

How Do We Teach Adults?

In the article entitled, *Andragogy: The Teaching and Learning of Adults*, it is pointed out that children come to school with limited experiences, while adults have a great deal of life experience upon which additional knowledge is more easily established (Noren, 1997). Knowles (1980) believes that teaching and learning of adults is different and one must think of the adult learner in the following manner:

- Adults want to know why they need to learn something before they begin learning it;
- Adults see themselves as self-sufficient and responsible for their own learning;
- Adults have a wealth of life experience which they bring to the learning environment;
- Adults are ready to learn when they have a need to learn;
- Adults are problem centered in their learning; and
- Adults motivation for learning comes from internal rather than external factors.

Through my online classes, I recognize Knowles' descriptors about adult learners and I provide the students with the opportunity to learn anytime, any place. I have eliminated walls and boundaries and I have provided a flexible schedule for adult learners while still maintaining the integrity of the course content. The transition from a traditional classroom to an online instructional delivery format is reviewed in the next section.

Developing a Web-based Environment

The key to developing a web-based environment is careful planning, clearly delineating the course requirements, and

meeting the needs of the students. The students will be making a shift from face-to-face instruction to an instructional approach that relies on technical linkages to bridge the gap separating the class participants. In a web-based environment, the instructor must do the following:

- Have management and administrative support;
- Develop a reliable instructional design;
- Have reliable equipment;
- Have students take an active role in the online delivered course by independently taking responsibility for their learning;
- Assist students in becoming familiar and comfortable with the delivery of technology and prepare them to resolve problems that will arise;
- Integrate a variety of delivery systems for interaction feedback;
- Make detailed comments on written assignments and return assignments without delay (Willis, 1992);
- Develop an understanding of the characteristics and needs of students with little experience in distance education;
- Adapt teaching methodologies to meet the needs of the students;
- Develop a working understanding of delivery technology, while remaining focused on your teaching role; and

- Balance your role as a facilitator as well as a content provider (Willis, 1995).

A Jupiter Communications Study revealed the following items about the students' attitudes toward online training that should be considered before pursuing this alternative instructional delivery approach: (1) variation in computer access can result in attitudinal differences; (2) experience in the case of computers in distance education courses versus traditional classrooms and home settings can also affect students' perceptions; (3) a wide variety of achievement levels and attitudes exist among both online and traditional learners; (4) and the lack of training in computers is the strongest inhibitor to successfully completing an online course (Peters, 2001).

The moving from face-to-face teaching to a web-based distance education approach will require the instructor to re-evaluate and reconstruct teaching approaches with the responsibility of learning moving from the instructor to the learner. The following table adapted from McVay, 1998, illustrates how a strategy normally used in the traditional classroom setting can be done in an online class setting.

The use of some of the traditional instructional approaches is easily converted into a web-based format that lends itself to as much or more interaction between instructor and student. The web-based format allows for a new lens to be applied to teaching strategies that have been used in the traditional classroom setting.

Table 1
Transition of Classroom-based Instruction to the Web

Classroom Instruction	Form of Web Instruction	Description of Potential Use
Class discussions	Chat-synchronous, immediate interaction with students and instructor.	Can be used for student and class interaction. It is useful to have predetermined times and discussion questions in advance of class.
Class discussions	Bulletin Board-asynchronous, allows student responses and updates.	Post questions on the Bulletin Board for student discussion.
Role-playing	Multi-user Dimensions	In the chat room students are assigned roles in advance of class.
Case studies	Chat	Provide case study in advance (via textbook or web pages) and ask students to come prepared to chat.
Case studies	Bulletin Board	Post specific case-related questions to Bulletin Board plus allow for threaded discussion of the case study.
Case studies	E-mail	Ask for a written assignment to be attached to e-mail.
Question and answer sessions	Bulletin Board	Designate a topic on the Bulletin Board for question and answers. Could also structure a threaded discussion.
Question and answer sessions	Chat	Post chat room hours in advance. Take into consideration geographical time differences.
Assignments and peer critiques	E-mail Attachment or assignment drop box	Send attachments to the instructor via e-mail or assignment drop box for grading and feedback.
Assignments and peer critiques	Web Page	Post to the web.
Assignments and peer critiques	Bulletin Board Posting	Can be used for informational or threaded discussion purposes.

Keys to Success in Developing and Teaching an Online Course

The success of my online courses relied on instructor and student training, administrative support, technical assistance, and communication tools such as bulletin boards, private mail, homework/drop box assignments and chat rooms. A questionnaire was used to gather student feedback. I did find that the private e-mail, bulletin board, chat room and homework/assignment drop box were excellent vehicles for integrating the interactive dialogue that was previously dominated by faculty lecture. With my newly developed communication strategies the students have become more active learners. They collaborate positively together in developing responses to numerous case studies and other course assignments.

Web-based courses often rely too heavily on asynchronous (delayed) communication which is slow and limits the type of communication between instructor and student and tends to remove any feelings of connection between instructor and student. The chat room is a synchronous (real-time) communication tool that allows for immediate feedback and interaction. The chat room provides for motivational encouragement and a sense of belonging to a learning community where the instructor recognizes the students as specific individuals and allows for a personal connection to the students' learning experiences. The chat room is an effective means of taking the "distance" out of distance education (Wang and Newlin, 2001).

The course design for my online classes allows for a chat room approach which assisted in eliminating some of the isolation that a student might feel from sitting alone in front of his or her computer and not having the ability to have face-to-face communication. I feel that the chat room is able to provide for a form of group dynamics that is often missing from web-based classes. The majority of the students found that use of the chat room was the most enjoyable part of the class because as one student so succinctly stated, "There was no pressure to perform in the sense of the traditional classroom where some students may feel intimidated. Everyone had a chance to make their thoughts known and to participate in class."

Preference Levels for Instructional Delivery Approaches

I have taught five online courses prior to the fall term of 2002. In each case I have asked general questions about the student's use of technology during the course. Because of the need for an understanding of the preference for instructional delivery approaches, this author sought answers to two questions: (1) Whether or not the students at the conclusion of the school buildings, grounds and facilities class increased or decreased their preference level for the online instructional delivery approach? (2) Whether or not the stu-

dents in the school buildings, grounds and facilities class do or do not prefer online versus face-to-face instruction?

The results of answering the survey questions, even though limited to the school buildings, grounds and facilities class, will assist the author to gain a better understanding of the learning that occurs in a graduate-level online course. The significance of answering the questions goes beyond the author's online course. It can provide insights about the nature of online learning and the use of alternative instructional delivery strategies that tend to assist in enhancing the confidence level of students taking an online course.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in the survey were students in my fall online school buildings, grounds and facilities class. The course is one of five courses needed to meet Ohio's superintendent licensure requirements.

Survey Questions

The first question of whether or not the students at the conclusion of the school buildings, grounds and facilities class increased or decreased their preference level for the online instructional delivery approach, was analyzed through the use of a pre and post-test survey that gave the following three ratings:

1. **20 points or higher**—an online course is a real possibility for you.
2. **Between 11 and 20 points**—an online course may work for you but you may need to make a few adjustments in your schedule and study habits to succeed.
3. **Less than 10 points**—an online course may not currently be the best alternative for you; talk to your counselor (Colorado Community College, 2002).

The second question of whether or not the students in the school buildings, grounds and facilities class do or do not prefer online versus face-to-face instruction was analyzed through a general survey that is given to the students during the last class meeting.

Hypothesis

A dependent t-test was used to determine if there were a significant higher mean difference between the pretest mean scores over the posttest mean scores for the online survey at the .05 level.

A tabulation of responses was used to determine why do or do not the students prefer online versus face-to-face instruction.

Limitations

The data gathered from the surveys were limited to a class of fourteen students. Because of this, the evaluation

did not compare responses of students taking other university online classes. As a result, the data collected may not necessarily reflect how students in other university online courses feel about the alternative instructional delivery approach.

Results

The first question was to determine whether or not the students at the conclusion of the school buildings, grounds and facilities class increased or decreased their preference level for the online instructional delivery approach. The result of the analysis, as depicted in Figure 1, was that there was no significant difference in the pretest and post-test means as treated by a dependent t-test. The similarity between the means and standard deviations show that the pretest and post-test scores are too great to show a significant difference.

The Probability t shown in Figure 1 indicates that the results of this statistical test would be due to random chance or sampling error 31% of the time if these data were taken from 100 samples. The standard allowable percentage is .05 (5%) or less. Thus, 31% chance of error or sampling error is too great to conclude anything other than that there is no difference in the pretest and posttest scores.

The second question was examining the degree to which students do or do not prefer online versus face-to-face instruction. The results were that six students liked both instructional formats, six students liked the online format, one student preferred the face-to-face instructional format and one student did not answer the question.

The results of the survey of the students indicated that online instructional approach did not present a negative learning environment for the students. One of the student's comments was that "I prefer online because it eases my schedule. I prefer face-to-face because I enjoy meeting people." The student's comment is the dilemma that this instructor has faced in trying to balance my approach to online instruction, especially dealing with an adult student population that is still trying to understand how to integrate technology into their own work and home settings.

Conclusion

Online classes are not for everybody. The online approach requires a paradigm shift on the part of student and instructor, especially as it pertains to not having face-to-face contact, access to a computer and the use of a compatible web browser. If the student has a comfort level with the tra-

ditional classroom, has limited technology skills, and does not commit the time to do the class work, the online approach may not be appropriate to pursue. I have also found that students are often frustrated when the technology support breaks down at either the student or instructor end.

I have found that students do not understand the time commitment they have to make to an online class. The students need to have some basic technology skills. The next time I teach an online class I will use a preliminary assessment questionnaire as a means of assessing the readiness of each student before registering for the class.

I have made a concentrated effort to personally contact the students more through phone calls, e-mails, bulletin board postings and through chat room sessions. I viewed my enhanced communication efforts as a means of keeping myself and the students accountable for meeting and understanding the course requirements. The additional contact time allowed me to assist students through their initial technology problems such as connecting to the Internet, eliminating fire walls to the chat rooms and determining how to use the assignment drop box.

The first two weeks of the class are the most critical for students to become accustomed to online communication tools as the primary source of receiving and sending information. My goal in each class is to take the fear out of using the computer and to ensure that the computer becomes a positive tool that assists in enhancing student understanding of the subject area.

Even though there may be barriers to doing an online course, it has brought a new stimulus to the Master of Education Program at Ashland University with other professors in the College using web-assisted and online instructional approaches.

Keys to the success of my online classes have been the support by the President and the Dean of the College of Education. This support by the administration has been enhanced by the support of Ashland University's Department of Instructional Technologies. The commitment of the technical support has been the most critical element in developing and delivering the online classes. Without the technical support for both the students and instructors, the online classes would have been doomed to failure.

The faculty and administration at Ashland University recognize that online courses are not right for every student or faculty member. Online course offerings represent a shift in the delivery of instruction but they provide higher education institutions the opportunity to reach a wider student

Dependent t-test for Pretest and Posttest Scores

Source	N	Mean	St. Dev.	t	Prob. t
Pretest	14	23.29	2.64	0.5054	0.3112
Posttest	14	23.64	2.98		

Figure 1

audience plus a positive alternative for master of education students and adult learners.

As the number of students wishing to attend institutions of higher education increases, alternative means of instruction should be considered. It is clear that from the survey results that one method of instruction will not meet the needs of all students and that there is room for online and face-to-face instructional approaches in the higher education setting.

Clearly the online instructional delivery approach is evolving process for adult learners. This article is designed to promote dialogue, with the hope that institutions of higher education will continue exploring how to better serve adult learners by using both online and face-to-face instructional delivery approaches

References

- Bingham, J., Davis, T. and Moore, C. (1996). Emerging technology in distance learning. Retrieved October 8, 2001, from http://www.horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/Distance_Learning.asp.
- Boettcher, J. (1999). Nuggets about the shift to web-based teaching and learning. Retrieved August 10, 2001, from <http://www.csus.edu/pedtech/Nuggets.html>.
- Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System. Is online learning for me? Retrieved August 26, 2002, from <http://www.collegelogin.ccconline.org/index.real?action=islearn>.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980) *The modern practice of adult education: Andragogy vs. pedagogy*. New York: Association Press.
- McVay, M. (1998). Facilitating knowledge construction and communication on the internet. *The Technology Source*. December 1998. Retrieved September 14, 2002, from <http://www.horizon.unc.edu/TS/commentary/1998-12asp>.
- Noren, J. (1997). Andragogy: The teaching and learning of adults. Retrieved August 8, 1999, from <http://www.park.edu/fac/facdev/noren.htm>.
- Peters, L., (2001, September/October). Through the looking glass: Student perceptions of online learning. *The Technology Source*. Retrieved September 13, 2001, from <http://www.horizon.unc.edu/TS/default.asp?show=article&id=907>.
- Wang, A., and Newlin, M. (2001, August). Online lectures: Benefits for the virtual classroom. *The Journal*, 29(1). Retrieved October 26, 2001, from <http://www.thejournal.com/magazine/vault/A3562.cfm>.
- Willis, B. (1992). Strategies for teaching at a distance. *Eric Digest* (ED351008 Nov 92). Retrieved September 7, 1999, from http://www.ihets.org/consortium/ipse/fdhandbook/inst_d.html.
- Willis, B. (1995). Guide #1: Distance education at a glance. Retrieved December 15, 1999, from <http://www.uidaho.edu/evo/dist1.html>.

Transitioning to an Online Instructional Delivery System: Successes and Challenges

Ronald B. Childress
Rudy Pauley
Marshall University

Abstract

This article examines many of the issues that the Graduate School of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University has experienced in its move to online delivery of coursework. Institutional, faculty, and student matters are addressed in the context of the transition. Examples of the challenges as well as successes are offered as a reference for institutions contemplating moving to or expanding online course offerings.

Online course delivery has become one of the fastest growing domains in higher education today. In 2001 nearly half of American colleges and universities offered online courses (Symonds, 2001). A continued and even more rapidly paced expansion of online delivery seems likely (Johnstone, 2003). The number of “credit bearing” courses offered by two and four-year degree granting institutions through distance delivery is estimated to have grown from 47,500 in 1997–1998 to over 118,000 in 2000–2001. Ninety percent of the institutions that reported offering distance education courses indicated that they used online technologies in which students did not interact “live” with others (Kiernan, 2003).

Most researchers of distance education trends acknowledge that online courses probably will not replace all face-to-face delivery, but they certainly expect a continued growth over the next several years (Maeroff, 2003; Symonds, 2001). The transition to an online delivery model can be a labyrinth for institutions today. Many colleges and universities have responded to the new influx of distance learners and the emerging delivery modalities without critically examining the resulting consequences for the institution as a whole.

Many times it is expected that the new technologies (e.g. online courses) can be centrally coupled with the teaching mission of a unit without critically examining the implications for the organization, faculty and students. In a desire to embrace emerging delivery models and technologies, many institutions do so without wanting to “change what we do.” Heeger (2000) suggests that innovations are often accepted at the margins of the institutional fabric but the core remains unchanged. This article will provide insight into the challenges and successes of one university’s transition to an online delivery system.

The Context

Marshall University, a regional university of over 16,000 students with the main campus located in Huntington, West Virginia, has developed more than 1,000 web-based courses

and has created more than 13,000 student web accounts in the past five years. The Graduate School of Education and Professional Development (GSEPD), headquartered 50 miles east of the main campus in South Charleston, is the graduate education outreach arm of the institution. As an organizational unit, the GSEPD’s history can be traced to 1972, when the West Virginia Legislature created what was then known as the College of Graduate Studies. Somewhat unique, this free-standing graduate institution was given the mission of providing graduate education opportunities to fully employed adult professionals throughout West Virginia’s remote and mountainous southern region. The College of Graduate Studies remained in existence as an independent institution until a second legislative action merged it with Marshall University in July, 1997. With its mission unchanged, the GSEPD has continued to provide graduate education opportunities to working adults, primarily professional educators, throughout this transition. Now as a part of Marshall University, the GSEPD has assumed an even broader statewide and regional graduate education distance delivery mission.

Evolution of the Delivery System

Prior to 1998, the primary method for fulfilling the outreach mission of the GSEPD was for faculty to travel by automobile to remote locations one night a week throughout the semester, teach a class, and return to their home base. GSEPD faculty were routinely traveling more than 500,000 miles annually throughout some of West Virginia’s most rural areas to provide these classes. This method was very labor intensive for faculty, was not cost-effective, and access to courses was limited to the distance students were able to travel between the end of the work day and the start of class.

The transition to web-based instruction has its roots in this commitment to an outreach mission. The transition has occurred in developmental stages, however, and has included the use of several increasingly sophisticated technologies over the years. The experimentation with each of these tech-

nologies was designed to facilitate increased program and course access for students.

In the early 1980s, an audio-conferencing system was installed at several sites throughout what was then a service area restricted to a 16 county region in southern and central West Virginia. The audio conferencing system did allow the synchronous interaction of faculty and students at multiple sites. The technology was not well developed, and telephone systems in many of the more rural areas did not have the capacity to support the system adequately. As a result, system failures frequently interrupted the instructional process. Over the long term, the cost of the equipment and the telephone line usage proved prohibitive.

Audio-conferencing was eventually integrated with the use of satellite technology to provide for both audio and video interaction. Again, the technology was not very sophisticated and the costs associated with the telephone lines and satellite uplinks/downlinks made the approach unsustainable over time. Also, as with the traditional onsite delivery by faculty and the audio conferencing system, student access was geographically limited by the driving distance to one of a few “receive” sites. Because the instructional delivery was synchronous, capacity was limited to the number of classes that could be offered in the 5:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. time slots.

The emergence of the Internet, and the subsequent widespread access, created a totally new scenario beginning in the mid 1990s. Starting with the development of one course for web-based delivery in 1998, GSEPD faculty have now developed in excess of 300 courses and are delivering more than 80 web-based course sections each semester. In most semesters, the number of internet based courses represents approximately 30% of the total number of course sections offered by GSEPD faculty. More than 90% of the 38 full-time faculty have adopted internet-based delivery strategies.

The transition to web-based instruction has allowed us to address several of the challenges faced with previous technologies. Students are able to access courses from any computer with Internet access and do not need special software to do so. Although scheduled synchronous student-faculty interaction does occur, typically most interaction is asynchronous.

Most significantly, perhaps, the transition to a web-based instructional delivery format has provided increased student access to programs and courses. The GSEPD is now enrolling students from all 55 counties in West Virginia. Four years ago, the major portion of student enrollment came from the 20 counties in south-central West Virginia.

Although increasing enrollment was not our primary objective in making a commitment to online instruction, we have experienced modest enrollment growth. One aspect of this growth has been our ability to better utilize the available enrollment capacity. Historically, a class delivered by a faculty member driving 140 miles round trip from South Charleston to Beckley has a capacity of 20. Given the geo-

graphic limitations (driving time) on student access to Beckley, however we might enroll only 10 students, leaving 10 student seats vacant. The fixed costs for the course are the same for 10 students as for 20.

Offering the same class online allows for full enrollment of the class without regard to student geographic location, thus allowing more effective use of the existing capacity. Enrollment and course section data from the last two academic years support this assertion. The GSEPD experienced a 4.5% increase in enrollment with a corresponding 7.2% reduction in the number of class sections offered in 2002-2003 over the same period in 2001-2002.

The Change Model and Process

A number of variables played a major role in developing the change model that has guided the transition to online delivery. At many institutions the responsibility for the development of online courses rested primarily with Instructional Technology (IT) personnel and faculty who were teaching these courses as overloads outside the normal delivery processes. We observed that the transition to online instruction appeared to be taking place outside of the routine functioning of the college, school or department.

At about the same time we read an article in the December 11, 1998, issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Guernsey, 1998) that described a “mentor” faculty strategy being implemented at George Mason University. In this model, the faculty member, who had some expertise in technology, was serving an interface role between faculty and IT personnel and served as an online instructional mentor for faculty. This concept of a faculty mentor system has become a key component of the transition to online delivery in the GSEPD.

A small group of faculty “Early Adopters” was identified as the frontline support for faculty learning to design and teach web-based courses. Our experience would suggest that faculty, especially a more senior faculty, is much more likely to seek and accept the assistance of a fellow faculty member than the technology expert. Although somewhat labor intensive, one-to-one faculty mentoring has been a crucial part of the transition to an online model. We have conducted very few formal faculty development sessions.

Because of the existing outreach mission, it was not necessary to “sell” the outreach concept. We were able to view the emergence of a web-based delivery system as a better strategy for achieving our mission. In one respect this was a logical step in a developmental process that had included the use of audio-conferencing and satellite technologies.

An organizational culture which supports risk-taking and change has evolved. Faculty have become comfortable and quite adept at the application of Michael Fullan’s “Ready-Fire-Aim” approach to problem-solving and change (Fullan,

1993). The result is a climate of almost continuous design, redesign and change.

The Policy Development Challenge

The transition to an online instructional delivery system poses some major challenges in the development of an institutional policy framework to support the diverse missions of the various academic units. When Marshall University developed its first policies for online course development and instruction, little guidance was available from other institutions. Nevertheless, critical issues had to be addressed. Among them were the impact of online course development and delivery on intellectual property, faculty workload, faculty compensation, course development criteria/guidelines, and technology requirements. In an attempt to facilitate and expedite the growth of online instruction, this initial policy was highly centralized in terms of the control of online course development and was incentive-laden for the development of courses by individual faculty members.

As we have evolved in our sophistication and use of online courses, a number of policy issues have emerged. Included among these is the extent to which the control of online courses should be centralized and apart from the normal course approval process. How online courses are best handled in terms of faculty load continues to be point of discussion. Our experience tells us that online courses are extremely labor intensive in terms of faculty time. The development of a policy structure that considers the development and teaching of online courses as routine and a part of normal expectations is a continuing challenge.

Other issues that have emerged include the challenge of developing a policy framework that focuses on developing online programs as well as courses and that acknowledges different roles for online instructors for “on-campus” versus “off-campus” courses and programs. We have also spent a significant amount of time discussing the different roles and expectations for undergraduate courses in comparison to graduate courses that are delivered online. The long-term advantages and disadvantages of the role of incentives in institutionalizing online delivery also continues to be a point of discussion for institutional policy makers.

In addition to policy development challenges that are institutionally focused, the transition to an online delivery system also poses challenges in a much broader context. For example, Marshall University is an active partner in a number of collaborative program arrangements with other institutions throughout West Virginia. In many cases, these collaborating institutions are not heavily involved in online delivery and have not developed the faculty capacity to do so. In several instances, our initial task has been to provide faculty training in online course development and delivery for these partner institutions.

One of the most challenging policy issues for any institution is related to course ownership and institutional iden-

ty. Historically, when institutions were assigned a specific geographic service area, the role and responsibility of a particular institution was easily identifiable. With the move to online instruction, the concept of a geographically defined service area is no longer as viable as it once was. Issues related to which institution receives the student credit hours, the graduates, and most significantly, the revenue that is generated from online courses are currently being negotiated on a case by case basis. Ultimately, these issues need to be resolved through the development of appropriate policies at the state and regional levels.

Responding to the Student Population

The GSEPD has a rich tradition of being responsive to the needs of the adult learner. Recent demographics show that the typical student enrolled in GSEPD programs is 36 years of age, female and employed full time. We know that the learning process for most adults is different from the didactic instructional strategies that have been typically used in the traditional college classroom (Knowles, 1990). Applying the principles of adult learning to the delivery of online instruction has been a critical component of our transition. The continuing challenge has been to be able transfer what we know about how adults learn into a viable online model.

In an effort to assess the impact of internet-based instruction on our students, the GSEPD has conducted an annual survey of students enrolled in internet based courses. As a result, we have amassed five years of data on student attitudes toward online instruction.

In general, our students have told us that they like the online delivery model (94% of all respondents would take another course online or recommend an online course to a friend). Sixty-six percent of the respondents stated that they had attended a workshop prior to taking their first online course. These workshops were developed in response to early attempts to familiarize students with the delivery platform to ensure a smooth transition to the online model. We are now providing a one-hour training session at the beginning of each semester for all first time users of the platform.

Interestingly, as the delivery model has evolved, students have reported (63% of all respondents) that they prefer from two to three face to face meetings per semester. In an effort to gauge the instructional value as perceived by the students, we asked those surveyed about the quality of the coursework in comparison to the traditional face-to-face classroom. Eighty percent of those responding indicated that they had received “equivalent or better” instructional value from the online courses. As a result of the survey and instructor evaluations from the online courses, we have concluded (1) that students want an online delivery option, (2) that they need training prior to their first online course, and (3) that the instructional effectiveness is at least equivalent to that of face-to-face instruction.

Lessons Learned

The transition to a more web-based instructional delivery system has been a challenging but rewarding process. Although we are far from completing the task, we have learned a great deal, albeit many times from our mistakes.

Unquestionably, the single most important organizational consideration is the purpose for getting involved in online instructional delivery. On the surface this appears to be a simple question that is easily answered. Our experience suggests that this is, in fact, a deceptively complex question that requires a considerable amount of reflection and thought.

In our case, we were able to view the move to online delivery as a next step in the use of technology for instructional delivery. Organizationally, online instruction was another strategy for achieving a well established and widely accepted outreach mission. As a result, the use of online instructional delivery was viewed as mission consistent and was more easily integrated into the policy structure and operation of the unit. Integration of online delivery into the core fabric of the unit is critical. Our observations suggest that academic units that approach online instruction as an initiative that is disconnected from the regular academic and faculty processes will likely not be successful over the long term.

We quickly learned that in the context of online learning, change is truly a constant. The most visible example of this is the continuous evolution of the course delivery platform (WebCT in our case). The adoption of each new version brings with it improvements in the delivery options but creates major new training and support challenges for faculty and students. Consequently, administrators and faculty leaders must work to establish an organizational climate that openly acknowledges that change is continuous and that it is demanding.

The development and articulation of a clear model to guide the change process is critical. We have not forced faculty participation in online instruction but have focused our efforts on creating an environment in which incentives (e.g., laptops, faculty development support, home Internet connections), peer influence and student demand/response facilitate participation. It is also critical to be realistic and publicly acknowledge the realities. The rhetoric and the reality of change are often at odds. Change is good, but the change process is challenging and difficult, and you must anticipate what Fullan (1993) has labeled the "implementation dip." Institutions should seek to create an environment that rewards reasonable risk-taking and minimizes penalties for failures. Celebrate your successes and learn from your setbacks.

Ultimately, the ability of an academic organization to institutionalize online instructional delivery is directly re-

lated to its ability to move online delivery from the organizational margin to the core. Consequently, it is essential that the commitment to online instructional delivery be integrated across the organization. Over the past five years, the GSEPD has incorporated a requirement for experiences/skills (or an expectation that this knowledge will be developed) in online delivery as a requirement for new faculty employment. We have included online course development and instructional delivery as merit pay criteria, established a peer review system for online courses, incorporated online course development and instructional criteria into the annual faculty evaluation, promotion and tenure processes, and integrated the assessment of online courses into the GSEPD system for course and instructor evaluation.

When considering the adoption of an online instructional delivery model, an academic unit must also ensure the involvement of all appropriate personnel from the outset. It must continually seek and nurture support for online delivery from all administrative levels; it must involve all available instructional technologists and computer services personnel early in the discussions. Finally, having access to the proper level of technical support is critical. Faculty need adequate computers (hardware), up-to-date software and access to personnel with the appropriate technical knowledge and skills in order to produce a high quality online course.

A critical component of our success to date has been a focus on supporting the "early adopters" and nurturing the growth of a faculty nucleus committed to and knowledgeable about online course development and delivery. This group has emerged as our "faculty mentor" group and is the key to expanding the acceptance and use of online instruction throughout the faculty.

A somewhat more formalized "Faculty User Group" has developed from this small group of early adopters. This group meets monthly and has evolved as the primary sounding board for our online efforts. The group also serves both educational and quality control functions as faculty routinely present both current and proposed online courses for review and critique by the group.

In 2001-02, we surveyed GSEPD faculty to elicit their feelings regarding the impact of online instruction across a broad range of variables. Twenty-eight full-time and part-time faculty members responded to the survey. Respondents indicated that online teaching had forced them to be more organized, more cautious in how they use language, and more evaluative in terms of their course content. They reported that their own written communication skills had improved, that they had become more technologically literate and that they believed their courses were better planned and developed. They also believe their courses have become more student centered, that they have become more creative in selecting instructional resources and course design, and that they spend more time thinking about and improving instruction.

Challenging the Myths

As we became increasingly involved in the transition to online instruction, we were constantly presented with a host of reasons why online instruction was not feasible and would not be effective. The most frequently presented myths about online instruction included the following assertions: (a) that senior faculty would not accept online approaches, (b) only certain courses were appropriate for online instruction, (c) online instruction severely limits the range of instructional strategies that we use, and (d) the transition to online delivery will result in the demise of traditional on-campus education. Other frequently stated myths included declarations that online instruction was not as educationally effective as face-to-face instruction, that online instruction costs less than traditional instruction, and that many students, especially those in rural areas, do not have Internet access and will be denied access to online courses.

Our experience to date suggests that, even though all of these assertions seem reasonable and plausible, they are, in fact, myths. Some of our most active online users are senior faculty. Age or years of experience do not seem to provide any predictability in terms of faculty acceptance of online instruction.

In terms of course applicability, we have found that there are few courses that cannot be effectively developed for online delivery. One of our most effective online courses is a practicum in our School Counseling Program. Rather than have sporadic and infrequent instructor-student interaction, as was the case in the traditional model, practicum faculty and students interact on a continuous basis and faculty are much better positioned to provide support for difficult or crisis situations that arise.

The prevailing assumption is that online instruction is limited to reading a selection of material and responding to a set of questions. Our experience has been much different. With the variety of instructional tools available, we are actually finding that online courses are more varied than many of our face-to-face courses in terms of the range of instructional strategies used.

We have seen no evidence that online instruction is resulting in the demise of traditional on-campus instruction. On-campus residential programs offer opportunities that are not possible in an online environment. The most intriguing aspect of this myth is how institutions resolve the issue of the role of online instruction for a campus-based, residential student population.

One of the surprising outcomes of our experiences to date revolves around student-teacher interaction. Many of our online courses are logging more than 3,000 student-teacher interactions with documentation that all students are involved. Clearly, this level of interaction does not reflect a decrease from that which one would anticipate in a face-to-face format.

The literature on the effectiveness of online instruction in advancing learner outcomes is embryonic at best. Nevertheless, our experience over the past five years suggests that online learning is at least as effective as face-to-face instruction in achieving specific student outcomes. Our anecdotal and perceptual evidence would support this contention from both the faculty and student perspectives.

In the beginning we were told repeatedly that online instruction would not be successful because students did not have ready Internet access. Since we are charged with providing graduate programs to some of West Virginia's most rural areas, this was of great concern for us. Our experience suggests that the opposite is true. Students routinely access the Internet from work and other community access points (i.e. public libraries) if they do not have home access. We have many anecdotal accounts from students that participating in an online course motivated them to secure Internet access at home.

Finally, a question of importance to all administrators considering a move to online instruction revolves around potential costs. One of the frequently heard statements was that the transition to an online instructional delivery system was motivated by a desire to save money. We have not found the transition to online instruction to result in a cost savings. Rather, we have discovered that we are spending at least as much money on course delivery, but we are spending it in a different manner. Funds that were previously used to support faculty instructional travel are now being used to provide up-to-date computers and other hardware that support online course delivery.

Conclusion

Much to our surprise, we have experienced a number of very positive but unanticipated outcomes from our transition to online instruction. There appears to be a substantial increase in upfront course planning and development, peer sharing of courses, and more cross-disciplinary interaction about course design and development. Faculty are using a broader array of instructional strategies and have expanded the scope of resources that are available to support instruction.

The range of student assessment strategies also seems to be expanded. Faculty are using more performance-based and formative/process assessment strategies. The use of electronic portfolios spanning an entire degree program is also emerging as a preferred assessment approach.

Along with our successes, we also recognize that we are facing a number of continuing challenges. The current economy and the subsequent decrease in state financial support pose particularly difficult challenges in terms of providing the resources needed to support online efforts. The increased competition among institutions for the online market, including the increasing role of the private sector in providing online programs, offers additional challenges.

The transition to a web-based instructional delivery system has been both challenging and rewarding. Clearly, our goal of increased student access to graduate programs and courses is being accomplished. Student access should continue to increase as we gain more experience in delivering online instruction.

References

- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. London: Falmer Press.
- Guernsey, L. (1998, December 11). A new career track combines teaching and academic computing. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, A35.
- Heeger, G. (2000, May / June). The new business of higher education. *Education Review*, Vol. 35.
- Johnstone, S. (2003, July / August). Importing and exporting of online courses. *Change*, 35,(4).
- Kiernan, V. (2003, August 8). A survey documents growth in distance education in late 1990s. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, A28.
- Knowles, M. S. (1990). *The adult learner: A neglected species* (Revised Edition). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Maeroff, G. (2003, July / August). Distance learning: Ctrl, Alt, or Del? *Trusteeship*, 23-28.
- Symonds, W. C. (2001, December 13). Giving it the old online try. *Business Week*, 76-80.

Using Online Instruction to Deliver a Discussion-Intensive Format

Herbert W. Broda
Ashland University

Abstract

Delivering a discussion-intensive curriculum via online instruction can pose a variety of challenges. This article presents an overview of a contemporary issues online graduate course, and analyzes the degree to which the course encouraged feelings of community, a tone of thoughtful and willing reflection, and an overall understanding of contemporary issues.

Introduction

“Would you be willing to teach your class online?”

For a “fifty-something” professor, that question was exciting, yet worrisome. Although intrigued with computer technology, I am certainly not an expert. I also savor the spontaneity and repartee that are so much a part of classroom instruction. So, the concept of only interacting with students via a keyboard was not instantly appealing. However, my agreement to teach the class “once” has now turned into an online course becoming a regular part of my teaching load.

At Ashland University, all Master of Education candidates are required to take a three semester hour core course entitled “Contemporary Education: Issues and Practices.” All “Bachelors Plus” students (persons with undergraduate degrees in fields other than education who are pursuing licensure) are also required to take the contemporary issues course.

Historically, this course has been taught as a face-to-face class that meets once a week for fifteen weeks. In the Fall of 2001, Ashland University opted to offer contemporary issues in both online and face-to-face formats. I have taught the course online every semester since its inception.

The electronic version is definitely a popular option. Every semester the online course has filled within the first week of open registration. It’s face-to-face counterpart has also continued to remain at capacity enrollment levels. Obviously, there is a need to offer both options.

In a course that focuses upon current controversial issues, it is essential that discussion be included as a primary instructional technique. If meaningful discussion is to occur, however, there must be a comfort level established which fosters feelings that the student is a part of class, rather just an individual completing assignments. For meaningful learning to occur, students need to feel a part of a supportive learning community (Turbill, 2001).

This article presents an overview of the basic structure of the contemporary issues course. Special emphasis is placed upon the degree to which the course encouraged feel-

ings of community, a tone of thoughtful and willing reflection, and an overall understanding of contemporary issues.

Background Information

Basic course demographics

Data were collected from three online sections of Education 500- Contemporary Issues. The courses were taught in Spring, 2002, Fall, 2002, and Spring, 2003. A total of forty-one persons were in the three sections. Forty-eight percent of the teacher participants taught at the preK- sixth grade level, with fifty-two percent at the secondary level. The breakdown of years of teaching experience for the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Percentage breakdown by years of teaching experience for participants in three sections of Education 500 (online)

No Experience	1-3 years	4-10 years	11 years or more
24%	51%	20%	5%

Course structure

The online contemporary issues course was divided into ten modules. Each module focused upon a general theme or cluster of issues (e.g., “what shapes public opinion”, “school reform initiatives”, “accountability”). Since a major objective of the course was discussion of educational issues, the modules were presented in a linear format, utilizing a specific timed release schedule. Most modules were active for a ten-day period. This ensured that all participants were considering the same cluster of issues during the same time span.

Modules consisted of one or more discussion threads that revolved around questions related to the module theme. Students were required to make five postings per week to the discussion threads (either original or follow-up postings). They also were expected to read all postings that were made to the discussion threads by other students. Each module also included a written assignment that was uploaded to the instructor.

A final independent study project was also required. Students could select a contemporary issue of personal interest and research the topic in depth. The final project was presented as a PowerPoint presentation that was uploaded into the *WebCT* course for all participants to view.

Clear expectations

Since it is critical that students know how to use the web, it is prudent to insist that students meet certain minimum requirements (Brooks, Nolan and Gallagher, 2001, p. 54). Ninety-five percent of the online students in the three contemporary issues online courses had no prior experience with internet-based coursework. It was essential, therefore, to make very clear what would be required. Approximately one week prior to the start of the course, a letter was sent to all students registered for the course. The letter explained basic hardware requirements and logistical details. In addition, it was stressed that students selecting an online course should have basic computer skills such as the ability to: download files such as pdf documents, print documents from the computer screen, utilize search engines, type at a reasonable rate, understand the basics of PowerPoint, send file attachments and navigate the Internet.

The initial letter also included the following:

“Frequently asked question: ‘Isn’t an online course easier than a traditional course?’

Answer: No. NO! NO!!”

The letter goes on to point out that because the online course requires frequent interaction and the systematic completion of regularly paced assignments that keep the group focused, the electronic version often requires as much or more time than a traditional class. This information is followed by a listing of statements from former students who have given advice to future online students. I selected, of course, those comments that emphasized the need to be prepared and give the time needed to meet the course requirements. The use of student quotes added a definite impact to the admonition to expect a significant workload in the course.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the initial letter. In most face-to-face graduate courses the “no show” rate for the first night of classes has been around ten percent. The “no show” rate for the online course has been around thirteen percent.

The course syllabus also emphasizes the need for regular interaction on the course site. Students are told the first evening that the course will take 6-8 hours of time per week—a time commitment equivalent to that of a face-to-face three semester hour course.

Face-to-face meetings

Dabbagh describes a total online format as one in which the network is the primary environment for discussions and assignments, even though some other elements such as face to face meetings may be incorporated (Dabbagh, 2000, p.

38). The online version of contemporary issues utilized asynchronous discussion as the primary communication vehicle. Assignments also were given online with student responses being uploaded to the instructor.

There were four face-to-face meetings during the fifteen-week semester. The first session focused heavily upon acquainting students with the technical details needed to access and utilize the *WebCT* course delivery system.

Although the technical information required at least half of the first session, other important elements were included during the first night. A sense of community was initiated through the use of a casual get-acquainted mixer activity. The activity was followed by the taking of digital pictures of each class member. These pictures were later posted in the secure *WebCT* site with a brief self-introduction that class members had posted to a “getting to know you” discussion thread. I feel that it is essential that an online class immediately focus upon the human dimension of the class. Without a doubt, the classroom is an emotional environment (White and Weight, 2000, p.7). People seem to be much more ready to communicate online if they have some basic understanding of who the class members are as individuals. On the first evening, there also was a discussion concerning the expectations inherent in a graduate-level course. Finally, the group explored how contemporary issues often surface in day-to-day happenings as reflected in resources such as *Education Week*.

During the week following the first meeting, participants were expected to log into *WebCT* and complete several short tasks that required the posting to discussion threads, as well as the uploading of a first “test” assignment. Students were given ample support information including the names, phones and emails of information technology department persons who watch over these online courses.

The second session was primarily intended to alleviate any concerns that may have arisen as class members attempted to get online and complete the expected tasks. It should be noted that nearly 95% of the participants in the three online sections referred to here had no prior experience with an online collegiate-level course. This fact made it absolutely essential that a comfort level be established quickly regarding the technology. Participants have greatly appreciated being able to “touch base” for a second time very early in the semester. The second session also focused heavily upon the history of educational change in the US, to establish a context for exploring modern day issues. Although this topic could be done as an online module, it seems to work well in a face-to-face environment.

The third session was at the midpoint of the course. This session again provided an opportunity for participants to connect a name in a discussion thread with a real human being. During the midpoint session, we also focus on state and local issues, about which there are many fewer online resources available.

The fourth session was held during the last week of the semester. This session provided an opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize the course content using a live discussion format. A rather extensive course evaluation is also done at this time. The same online course analysis form has been utilized every semester, and has provided the data referred to in this article. The final session also adds an element of closure to the class, and once again returns the focus to the personal dimension.

How many face-to-face meetings to include is always a big question. Given the lack of online course experience, it is absolutely essential that participants receive a thorough "training-practice-feedback" opportunity. By scheduling two sessions immediately at the start of the course, it is possible to solve most technology related problems. As online coursework becomes more common and students enter classes like contemporary issues with prior experience, it may not be as important to schedule an immediate second week session. It is interesting to note, however, that seventy-eight percent of the forty-one participants in the three sections of the course, responded that the four face-to-face meetings were "just enough". Only ten percent responded that we met "too often" and twelve percent indicated that we met "two little".

Course Outcomes

Feelings of community

It is my firm belief that students completing an online course should feel that they have been a part of a class, rather than just isolated individuals completing assignments. The literature supports the concept that online staff development can encourage and facilitate increased interaction among students, and between students and instructor (Killion, 2000).

Figure 1 shows the continuum and open response prompt that was used to assess the sense of community that existed in the online courses.

The responses to this question were very enlightening. It was my original feeling that a level of 7.0 would have been a clear indication that the group was generally seeing itself more as a functioning class and learning community than as a group of unconnected individuals. I was very

pleased to see that the average of the three classes was a rank of 7.91. The class averages for the three groups ranged from 7.7 to 8.2. Comments from students were very indicative of a positive climate. For example:

"Discussions made you realize that everyone was dealing with the same issues, with similar experiences."

"I know the people in this class a lot better than people in my classes that meet every week."

"There was a sense of family among the members."

"I totally appreciated the supportive remarks, words of encouragement and feedback. It really instilled in me that I am a professional with valid points to share with colleagues. Touching!"

Those few persons who ranked the sense of community as a five or six, often had telling comments also:

"I'm sure that the lack of feeling a part is mostly my doing. I didn't put a large amount of effort into that part of the course" (gave a rank of "5")

"My fault because I didn't participate enough in discussions" (gave a rank of "6")

Atmosphere of thoughtful reflection

For a discussion-based course to be successful, whether online or face-to-face, it is critical that an atmosphere of thoughtful reflection be established. As an online instructor, I was eager to test Brooks' assertion that "...with graduate courses and adult learners, electronic conversations are every bit as effective as in-classroom discussions, and often much more so." (Brooks, et al., p.28).

As a professor teaching graduate courses for many years, I have frequently observed that large classes (more than twenty students), tend to exhibit three circles of interaction. There are usually three or four students who take a very active part in discussion, and can usually be counted upon to volunteer an opinion on any subject throughout the evening. There also are also three or four students who rarely will contribute to a discussion unless asked specific questions, and even then may only contribute very simplistic responses. However, the majority of students in a large face-to-face graduate class tend to "check in" by distribut-

"To what extent did you feel that you were a part of a "class" rather than just an individual person completing a series of assignments?" The following continuum was then included:

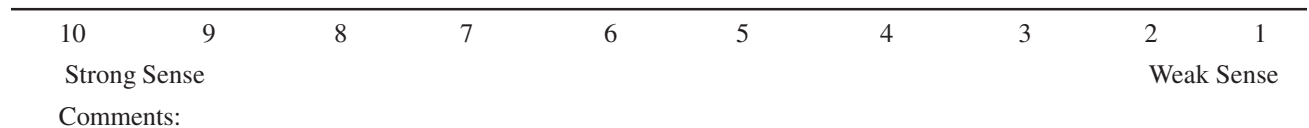


Figure 1. Question on final course assessment that focused on the sense of community that was fostered in the online environment

ing comments two or three times throughout an evening, but then settle back to listen (I hope!) to the conversations of others.

Since contemporary issues online required a specified number of postings to the discussion threads, it was very difficult for a student to just “check in” occasionally. I have followed Brooks’, et al. admonition that to promote online discussion, one has to do more than just suggest that students become involved. The participation needs to be required (Brooks, et al., p.66). As long as the participation expectations are clearly quantified and presented as written expectations, I have found that students are very cooperative.

Thoughtful reflection is also enhanced by providing students who normally are uncomfortable speaking out in class with another venue for expression. In fact, students who don’t usually participate in class are often more likely to express their opinions online, especially if participation is mandatory. (Bennett and Green, 2001, p. 6).

The responses to the course evaluation question: “What did you like best about the course?” strongly support the feeling that an atmosphere of thoughtful reflection was created in these classes. This very open-ended question generated a variety of responses, many of which mentioned the flexibility to work on the course at any time of day without the need to drive to campus. Others mentioned specific items relating to module content.

Interestingly, forty-seven percent of the responses included the insight that thoughtful reflection was facilitated and enhanced. Some samples of student responses included:

“It was a true sense of community that I did not expect. Everyone was very candid about their opinions. I liked being able to look over things before posting.”

“I liked being able to think about what I was going to say. In a classroom setting you are usually on the spot.”

“I felt freer to express myself.”

“People were more honest than I feel they otherwise would have been.”

“I could take some time to think before I spoke (or wrote).”

“I like the online discussions because sometimes I’m shy in class.”

“Being able to “talk” without being interrupted. It also gave me time to think it through as I typed instead of saying it in a rush.”

The student responses to the question “What did you like best about the course?” clearly echo Killion’s findings that “students report that they are more thoughtful and reflective since they have time to think, write and revise their responses before ‘saying’ them out loud.” (Killion, p.51).

Although there were many possible categories of response that could have been given to this question, it is impressive that nearly half of the responses specifically referred to nature, quality and/or facilitation of instruction.

Student perception of overall understanding of contemporary issues

In order to assess students’ general assessment of the knowledge gained in the course, a basic rating scale was used in response to the prompt: “To what extent did this course help you to understand contemporary educational issues?” Students could check either: extremely helpful, quite

Table 2
Percentage breakdown of ratings in response to the question “To what extent did this course help you to understand contemporary educational issues?” (Composite of three sections of Education 500- online)

extremely helpful	quite helpful	adequate	not very helpful
60%	35%	5%	0%

helpful, adequate, or not very helpful. Table 2 shows the composite results for all three sections.

It was very encouraging to find that ninety-five percent of the graduate student respondents viewed the course as either “extremely helpful” or “quite helpful” in understanding contemporary issues. The fact that well over half of the group chose “extremely helpful” when a lesser, yet positive ranking (“quite helpful”), was available is also noteworthy.

Out of forty-one participants with widely differing experience, only five percent rated the experience as “adequate”, and not one person rated the class as “not very helpful”. The terms “adequate” and “not very helpful” were chosen for the negative side of the continuum specifically because of their “softer negativity”. It was assumed that a student who mildly felt that he/she had not gained a great deal from the course would be more likely to choose one of these descriptors rather than harsher terms such as “waste of time” or “poor”. Only two persons, however, out of forty-one participants, choose even the “adequate” category.

Another opportunity to indicate that the course had not provided a background in contemporary issues was provided by the open-ended question: “Do you feel that you “missed” something by taking the course online?” Ninety-five percent of the responses very clearly stated that nothing was “missed”. In fact, people made several strong statements such as:

“I probably did more research and reading than I would have done in a “regular” class. I am glad to have been able to take an online course. It taught me so much more than a normal classroom setting- it made me participate!”

“I actually think I learned more in this class than many of my others in a classroom setting.”

There were only two respondents who indicated that something was missing:

“Yes, but this is a personal bias. I’ve learned that I would rather be in a classroom with other people.”

“Maybe some friendships?”

Even the two “negative” responses above did not in any way indicate that their understanding of the course content was less than they had hoped. These folks evidently have learning styles that function better in a face-to-face environment.

Conclusion

As a new online course instructor, I was very interested in determining how well the course was being perceived by students. Since individual classes are intentionally small (often under fifteen students), I felt that it would be more useful to combine results from several classes.

The questionnaire data have been very helpful. It most certainly appears that students do have a sense of community in this contemporary issues online environment. I must admit that I had hypothesized that the sense of community rankings would have been lower. I am pleasantly surprised.

Ever since I began to teach online, I have been impressed with the quality of interaction that I have seen. Students do take the time to reflect before they write, and then edit before they post. Although there still are students who post only the minimum and others who post perhaps too often, the majority of students meet the posting requirements through thoughtful reflection and writing. Based upon my own past experience, I can affirm that the general level of substantive participation is greater in an online class than in a large graduate course.

Student perception of knowledge gained in the course was also highly encouraging. Of course, what students

“think” they have learned and what actually has been internalized often are two very different results. I can attest, however, that the mix of final course grades for the online classes are nearly identical to those in my face-to-face graduate classes.

This “fifty-something” professor is very glad that he explored online teaching. To be very candid, my preferred teaching style is still face-to-face. However, I enjoy the variety and creativity that occasional online courses provide. Now and then, we all need a change of pace and place! I also am very gratified to learn that this style of teaching appears to be meeting my expectations for a classroom, and more importantly, my students’ expectations for a course.

References

- Bennett, G., and Green, F.P. (2001). Student learning in the online environment: No significant difference? *Quest*, 53(1), 1-13.
- Brooks, D. W., Nolan, D. E., and Gallagher, S. M. (2001). *Web-teaching: A guide to designing interactive teaching for the world wide web* (2nd ed.). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Dabbagh, N. H. (2000). The challenges of interfacing face-to-face and online instruction. *TechTrends*, 44(6), 37-42.
- Killion, J. (2000). Log on to learn. *Journal of Staff Development*, 21(3), 48-53.
- Turbill, J. (2001, July/August). A face-to-face graduate class goes online: Challenges and successes. *Reading Online*, 5(1). Available: http://www.readingonline.org/international/inter_index.asp?HREF=turbill1/index.html.
- White, K. W., and Weight, B. H. (2000). *The online teaching guide: A handbook of attitudes, strategies and techniques for the virtual classroom*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Online Education Is Not For Everyone

John Sikula
Ashland University
Andrew Sikula, Sr.
Marshall University Graduate College

Abstract

Online education is not for everyone. Although it is becoming increasingly popular, online education has both benefits and limitations. It is certainly convenient, and it allows some people access to education who otherwise might be prevented from involvement. But its impersonal nature and the many resources needed to deliver quality online education with consistency and effectiveness are daunting. Not everyone can or should provide online education, depending upon many factors such as the mission of an educational institution, the availability of technological resources, the operational expense budget, the interests and skills of the faculty, and the availability of other options for potential participants.

Introduction

Online courses and programs are proliferating across America and the world. There are some definite advantages for students in selecting to be educated in this manner. But are the primary reasons for choosing to go this route consistent with the missions and purposes of colleges and universities, the programs themselves, and/or the faculty? Too little of the educational literature seriously analyzes questions like the one just posed (Kovel-Jarboe, 2001).

The purpose of this article is to encourage readers to reflect more in depth about the pros and cons of online education.

Some Benefits Of Online Education

The major benefits of online education can be summarized as falling into five related areas: 1. convenience; 2. flexibility; 3. accessibility; 4. style preference; and 5. technology enhancement.

Online education is convenient, especially for students who have to spend time commuting to class, and money on travel, food, housing, clothes, and/or child care (Venkatesh, 2000). A student can eat, drink, smoke, do the laundry and a host of other tasks while at the same time attending to schooling. Multitasking is common today, and having one's undivided attention in almost any task is becoming very rare. Witness, for example, the use of cell phones while driving, eating, drinking, and engaging in activities historically more private in nature. The convenience of online education applies to instructors as well who have much the same benefits as students.

Related to convenience is the flexibility provided by online education. Students and faculty can fit instruction into their own busy schedules, since computer access to information is available twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week. Many students report that they take online courses

because they do not have to leave work or home to attend classes. Computer delivery of instruction also allows teachers of excellence to be shared more broadly because they are not limited by locality, travel expenses, or time constraints.

Accessibility to education is also increased by online education because it allows house-bound people, the handicapped, rural residents, the elderly, and others historically limited in educational opportunities to have options previously unavailable. Many proponents of e-learning also argue that it reduces social barriers in education related to class, race, gender, wealth, and personal appearance.

It is clear that online education is attractive to students who prefer, in terms of learning style, to learn and to operate at their own pace (Brown, 2001). Control of the learning environment is less in the hands of the instructor and is more in the control of the student. Learner-centered education is more self-directed and is preferred by independent thinkers. This style of learning also appears more effective than instructor-centered education for students who are introverted, language challenged, or in need of additional time.

Online education also enhances the technical skills of both students and instructors. It opens up new worlds of information via the internet, and it allows more sharing of information between class members. Feedback is faster and learning rates can be increased, while at the same time computer skills are being developed. This can have positive corollary benefits in other arenas.

Limitations

Of course, there are some limitations associated with online education. These generally can be categorized into the following five related areas: 1. impersonal; 2. training; 3. infrastructure expenses; 4. technical support; and 5. effectiveness.

It is obvious that online education significantly reduces and sometimes eliminates face-to-face interaction between students and teachers. Such interaction is more important to some students, teachers and institutions than to others. Some teachers believe that the essence of education centers around the close, personal relationships developed between students and teachers, and they argue that instruction via computers does not assist in this regard. In fact, such instruction usually reduces any on-campus life and opportunities to really experience college spirit development. Students are insulated, and they do not derive any social or informal benefits from campus life. Online education may reduce institutional loyalty and relegate degree granting to aggregating computer time. The essence of education is student/teacher dialog, conversation and interaction, and computers can simulate but not replicate these key learning components (McAlister, Rivera and Hallam, 2001).

Successful online education requires that both instructors and students be trained in how to use the required hardware and software. This training exceeds the expertise needed to be effective in more traditional settings. Without it, the learning expected simply will not take place, and both student and faculty frustration and even hostility may develop. Some online education assumes that students and instructors have expertise and skills which, in fact, are absent. Technology has advanced tremendously over the years, but, nonetheless, almost every online course still experiences some form of mechanical/technical breakdown over its duration (Agre, 2000).

The biggest drawback to online education is the expense of computers and required equipment and their constant need for maintenance, repair, and replacement/updating (Hawkes & Cambre, 2000). Such tremendous costs are not sustainable by many institutions. Related to this, online education requires that a compatible infrastructure be in place at both the delivery and receiving sites. Without such, effective teaching or learning will not occur. Although less of a problem with each passing year, not all students have computers or easy access to them, and sometimes when they do, the various computer systems involved are incompatible.

And even when everyone has the right hardware and software, it is not uncommon for some type of failure to occur, which is not correctable by students or the instructor. So another limitation of online education is that it necessitates the availability of technical support and additional staff. More staff adds to the enhanced expenses problem. Such costs are generally not required in more traditional classroom settings which do not require computer laboratory equipment and satellite arrangements.

Finally, the effectiveness of online education has yet to be proven. Beyond convenience, some critics ask why it should be done at all (Armstrong, 2000). It has not been determined to be any more effective than more traditional instruction; it may make class rapport more difficult to develop; and it requires students to work independently when

the goals of some courses, programs and colleges stress cooperative learning and the building of close personal relationships between classmates and teachers. And obviously, online education does not lend itself easily to some academic areas, such as public speaking, athletic training, dental hygiene, or surgery. Especially as we move to more team based, project oriented organizational work and learning structures, the wisdom of moving toward individual learning endeavors and arrangements becomes questionable.

Factors To Consider

There are many factors to consider when determining the degree to which an educational institution may want to move in the direction of online education (Levy, 2003). Of course, it is popular and trendy to do so. But is the move consistent with the goals, mission and niche of the programs, college, and/or faculty? Are the resources available in terms of hardware, software, infrastructure, technically skilled and motivated instructors, support personnel, and training opportunities to deliver instruction in a quality fashion? What are competitors doing? And, do you really want to compete for students in this arena? What are the chances of success? Finally, how are issues related to copyright, fair use and the ownership of intellectual property going to be guided and settled? These and related questions should be thoroughly addressed before moving en masse in the direction of online education.

Conclusion

Online education is an increasingly popular format for instruction today. Its effectiveness appears to date to be no better or worse than more traditional teaching. It is different and convenient. Moving in this direction requires the considerable investment of resources, and it needs to be considered thoroughly and carefully.

Contrary to current higher education spending patterns, *what* we teach is far more important than *how* we teach. Educators and administrators need to acknowledge and implement two instructional truisms, namely:

- The trump in teaching is the teacher, not the technology; and
- The lesson in learning is the liturgy, not the labyrinth.

References

- Agre, P. E. (2000). Infrastructure and institutional change in the networked university. Version of 13 June 2000, Available URL: <http://dlis.gseis.ucla.edu/people/pagre/cenic.html>.
- Armstrong, L. (2000). Distance learning: An academic leader's perspective on a disruptive product. *Change*, 32(6), 20-27.
- Brown, K. G. (2001). Using computers to deliver training.

-
- Which employees learn and why? *Personnel Psychology*, 54(5), 271-296.
- Hawkes, M., and Cambre, M. (2000). Cost factor: When is interactive distance technology justifiable? *The Journal: Technological Horizons in Education*, 28(1), 27-32.
- Kovel-Jarboe, P. (2001). The changing contexts of higher education and four possible futures for distance education. Issues challenging education. University of Minnesota. Available URL: <http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/kovel.asp>.
- Levy, S. (2003). Six factors to consider when planning online distance learning programs in higher education. Available URL: <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring61/levy61/htm>.
- McAlister, M. K., Rivera, J. C., and Hallam, S. F. (2001). Twelve important questions to answer before you offer a web based curriculum. *The Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 4(2).
- Venkatesh, V. (2000). Determinants of perceived ease of use: Integrating control, intrinsic motivation, and emotion into the technology acceptance model. *Information Systems Research*, 11(4), 342-365.

Online Instruction

An Alternative Delivery System for Higher Education

Michael Wronkovich
Ashland University

Abstract

In an increasingly technological society, delivery systems for professional development and higher education have greatly expanded. Video conferencing and web-based alternatives provide opportunities to extend the college campus far beyond the boundaries traditionally considered feasible. Adult learners have found the convenience of web-based instruction fits their already complicated lifestyle. And for the university, web-based learning is cost effective. The two major questions for this paper are: (1) How does an institution begin web-based instruction? (2) How does it maintain quality for the students who are learning over long distances?

Introduction

Ashland University in Ohio presently uses software known as *WebCT* as the basis for delivering web-based instruction. The University offers students an option to take many graduate-level courses in both the traditional instructional format and the on-line format. For Ashland University, the definition of an on-line course is one in which students meet at least three times in face-to-face situations and complete the remainder of their work using the tools of *WebCT*. There were many steps that led Ashland University to this format, and the development of web-based instruction is an ongoing process. The on-line work has been supported in some cases by video conferencing, which permits additional opportunities for face-to-face experiences with greater convenience for both the students and the instructor.

General Background to Online Learning

The phenomenon of online learning has grown tremendously at the university level at the beginning of the 21st Century. Virtual courses and entire virtual programs are being offered across the country, allowing for real expansion of learning opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. In reviewing recent publications on the topic, there is evidence of some growing pains with the development of online learning. Research by Chung (2003) sites the need for support for successful online learning.

In a WWW-based virtual learning environment where student and teachers are physically separated, the quantity and quality of interaction among students and with instructors affects learning.

Research by O'Sullivan (2003) suggests that the online instruction can actually enhance the students' experience *if* constructed properly.

Learning pedagogies increasingly involve a synthesis between traditional lectures and the use of case studies and project based group work. The Internet provides new opportunities to this learning ap-

proach. Internet applications can be developed for project based assignments, which are cheap and easy to deploy. They offer students interactive assignments and the opportunity to benchmark with other assignments online.

A review conducted by Wallace (2003) suggests that online learning is expanding, but direct observation of the process is suggested to help bring this new form of teaching and learning much needed refinement.

The review indicates that, although there has been extensive work to conceptualize and understand the social interactions and constructs entailed by online education, there has been little work that connects these concepts to subject-specific interactions and learning.

What seems most obvious from a review of the development of online learning is that students who are comfortable with e-learning and are good self-managers have the greatest chance for success with the process. This was noted by Smith, Murphy & Mahoney (2003) who found that these two factors were of paramount importance in predicting success for the online student.

The Journey to *WebCT* and Online Instruction

For Ashland University, the journey toward online learning began in 2000 with the search for a delivery system. Ashland University adopted *WebCT* as the delivery system that year after researching several options. Options included e-College, supporting a self-constructed web program, adopting other commercial programs (e.g., *Pegasus* and *Blackboard*), or joining a compact to support web self-designed software delivery systems. The major factor contributing to the decision to selecting *WebCT* as the delivery system was the cost effectiveness of the software. Ashland University opted to work with the Ohio Learning Network (OLN) to purchase the software as part of their consortium, which enhanced the cost effectiveness of the software. *WebCT* delivers instructors all the tools one might need to effec-

tively manage an online course at a cost per year manageable for institutions. The Director of Instructional Technologies and selected faculty members reviewed the system, but the decision to purchase *WebCT* came from the Instructional Technologies Director.

Part of the purchase agreement is support from *WebCT*, both network and administrative support. Since Ashland University houses the software, a network engineer from the University takes care of the server and the upgrades. Staff members from instructional technologies also take care of putting up the courses for trained instructors and maintaining the course database.

Staffing and Training for Online Learning

The experience at Ashland University with the development of online learning has been an incremental process. Starting with full time instructors, Ashland University offered the opportunity for staff to use *WebCT* to enhance instruction in traditional courses. These enhancements were not viewed as “online learning” per se. Instead, it was a process for the University to test the effectiveness of the software and how well it could be used to fit the principles of instruction at Ashland University.

After several staff members explored the software, their experience coupled with that of their students, convinced University officials to proceed with the development of online courses leading to the first online graduate program. The initial step was to define what Ashland would constitute as an “online” experience. University personnel decided that in order to fit the University’s commitment to the its motto, “accent on the individual,” that it would be important to maintain a certain minimum of personal, face-to-face contact hours for each course. That minimum was set at three meetings. The timing of those meetings has been left to each individual instructor in the online format.

With the rough outline of what would constitute online learning, the next phase was to establish staff development. The instructional technology department was presented with the task of creating staff development and presenting opportunities in a convenient format. Twelve hours of instruction on *WebCT* establishes a staff member as qualified to teach online. Those twelve hours of instruction give the staff members an overview of the various tools available for courses online. Instructors have tools like assignment folders, closed mail loops, closed chat rooms, closed posting boards, and many, many more. This allows instructors to continue to teach in a style comfortable to them, even though the course is actually being taught on the World Wide Web.

One of the key features of *WebCT* is the ability to keep closed loops for students and instructors. An open web site allows for intrusion by anyone on the World Wide Web. By closing the loop, instructors are insured that only their students will be able to view each others work and communicate to each other in activities such as online chats and online posting boards.

Once the fundamentals were established for training and course development, the next step was to create the opportunity for a complete online graduate program. The first program chosen for development was the Masters in Curriculum and Instruction in Technology. It was considered a logical choice since graduate students choosing this program should have the highest technology skill level coming into the program. And staffing the program would be instructors equally comfortable with technology.

An instructional staff of five adjunct professors was selected to begin work on developing the program under the direction of the Program Chair. All five instructors are, or have been, full-time field educators who have extensive technology backgrounds. Each was selected to fill a particular skill need in the program. All five were trained on *WebCT* through the University Instructional Technologies Department. After training, all five were given assignments to develop and deliver their individual courses to graduate students using *WebCT*.

Graduate students selecting the option of taking *WebCT* courses were asked to complete not only the traditional course evaluation forms, but also special forms adapted for online learning. It is a critical step in the development of online courses that student feedback is used to fine-tune the instruction in each course. This not only enhances the course content, but also it helps instructors learn which delivery systems work best for the content they are delivering.

Monitoring Development of Courses and Initial Responses to *WebCT*

Since Ashland University announced the online option for graduate learning, many students have taken advantage of the program. The reasons have varied, but most indicate convenience as the most important reason for taking courses online. With professionals today, the time demands of the job make it difficult to take graduate courses and professional development programs. The online student can make the learning fit his or her schedule rather than vice versa.

There are some important caveats for online learning, however. Faculty must make it clear to students that they have different responsibilities as an online learner. Instructors must assume that students have ongoing access to the World Wide Web, that they have sufficiently updated software compatible with the course, and that they have a level of proficiency with the Internet so as to be able to handle the online learning process.

The following caveats should help the online instructor with the initiation process for students:

1. Students must actively initiate more communication with professors and other students when taking online courses. Students need to be reminded that their professors cannot “see” them during many of the activities, and that the professors can only react to the words of the students.

-
2. In all graduate courses, students are more responsible for their own learning than in undergraduate programs. Professors are facilitators, coaches and colleagues who are there to help in the learning process. In graduate online courses, this is even more apparent.
 3. When students have problems with the delivery system (*WebCT*), they need to articulate the problem with clarity. Sending a message or calling with a message that says, "My program does not work, what's wrong?" is of little assistance to the professor. Students need to learn to be specific with details so the professor or the Instructional Technologies staff can determine the problem and fix it.
 4. Most importantly, students need to be reminded that procrastination in an online course is the worst sin of all. If procrastination hurts in a regular course, it will be deadly in an online course. This is the one problem that is mentioned most by those who have difficulty with online learning. Students lacking self-discipline are prone to problems with online studies.

Video-Conferencing and Online Learning

One enhancement to the online experience is the opportunity for video-conferencing. Equipment has become quite affordable and the technology for connecting remote sites has really improved. It is very easy for instructors to learn how to use video-conferencing, and this technology can allow for small group sessions from up to four different remote sites at the same time.

Summary

What we have learned with the brief experience to date at Ashland University is that online options enhance the

institution's ability to deliver instruction through another means and maintain high quality. The key to maintaining quality is oversight by the Department Chair and diligence of the instructors to use all the appropriate tools of the delivery system (*WebCT*). What the instructors have found to date is that the process of teaching online changes with each experience. Like anything else, we learn from our successes and failures with online teaching. The reality is, however, that the online option is here and it is viable given careful oversight.

References

- Chung, S. (2003). Design of support tools for knowledge building in a virtual university course. *Interactive Learning Environments, 11*(1), p. 41.
- Meyer, K. (2003). The Web's impact on student learning. *T.H.E. Journal, 30*(10), p. 14.
- O'Sullivan, D. (2003). Online project based learning in innovation management. *Education + Training, 45*(2), p. 110.
- Smith, P., Murphy, K., and Mahoney, S. (2003). Towards identifying factors underlying readiness for online learning: An exploratory study. *Distance Learning, 24*(1), p. 57.
- Wallace, R. (2003). Online learning in higher education: a review of research on interaction among teachers and students. *Education, Communication & Information, 3*(2), p. 241.

The Mid-Western Educational Research Association *Gift Membership*

A gift membership has been given to you, _____

by _____

Your name is now included as a member in one of the most recognized, well respected, educational research groups in the United States and Canada. Your **one year membership** includes a subscription to the ***Mid-Western Educational Researcher***, the Association's journal that highlights research articles, features, interviews, and Association news. Members pay reduced registration fees for the annual meeting held in Chicago in October. This conference attracts many nationally recognized leaders in educational research. Enjoy your membership.



Thank you for providing your colleague, student, or friend with a special one year gift membership to the Mid-Western Educational Research Association. It is a gift of professional involvement that is sure to be appreciated throughout the year. To give your gift membership fill out the top portion of this card and use it to inform the recipient of the gift membership; then fill out the bottom portion of this card and mail it with your check to: **Jean W. Pierce—Dept EDCSE—Northern Illinois Univ.—DeKalb, IL 60115**

	Person Receiving Gift Membership	Person Giving Gift Membership
Name	_____	_____
Address	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Affiliation	_____	_____
Work Phone	_____	_____
Home Phone	_____	_____
E-mail	_____	_____
Fax	_____	_____
Division	_____	_____
Preference (optional)		

Check one below and make check payable to Mid-Western Educational Research Association.

Professional Membership—\$25

Student Membership—\$15

Student must be currently enrolled.



The Ohio State University
2500 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Columbus, Ohio
Permit No. 711
