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Crossing the Rubicon: Introducing fully online courses into the curriculum of a traditional liberal arts college

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CROSSING THE RUBICON:
INTRODUCING FULLY ONLINE COURSES INTO THE CURRICULUM OF A TRADITIONAL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

Blended Learning in the Liberal Arts Conference
Bryn Mawr College, May 19, 2016
PRESENTERS

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AGENDA

• The DeSales University context
• The objective of our online course project
• Getting faculty on board
• Why students enrolled in the course
• Courses developed to date and planned for next year
• The collaborative development process
• Faculty perspective on developing and teaching the course
• Open discussion / Q & A
DeSales University Context

• The Lehigh Valley’s Catholic university (near Allentown, PA)

• Traditional day FT enrollment: ~1,650 (2/3 in residence halls)

• Vibrant adult UG education program and graduate programs (both of which are increasingly online)

• Retains traditional emphasis on the liberal arts and sciences, but responsive to market demand for directly career related majors in business, nursing / healthcare, and the performing arts

• Heretofore, day students generally prohibited from taking online classes
**Objective of the Online Master Course Project**

As described in the DeSales University Strategic Plan 2015-2020

*To provide traditional day students with the opportunity to complete up to two fully online courses as part of their undergraduate degree program*

**Why?**

- To strengthen students’ preparation for graduate study or professional development
- To provide flexibility for our students to pursue professional placements in internships, co-ops, and international or service learning
GETTING FACULTY ON BOARD

Administration Priorities

• Frequently scheduled, high enrollment courses – ‘core courses’
• High-quality, re-usability, cost-control

Written Agreement Between DSU and Faculty Member

• Course defined as a “joint work product”
• Compensation for course development
• Right of first refusal to teach
• Defined circumstances under which other instructors can use the course
• Ability to designate up to 1/3 of course material as “personal” and not for use by a different instructor
## Why Students Enrolled

**Survey Results (N=59)**

Which of the following factor(s) was **MOST IMPORTANT (CONTRIBUTED)** to your decision to enroll in this online course?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Most Imp #</th>
<th>Most Imp %</th>
<th>Contrib #</th>
<th>Contrib %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need schedule flexibility to accommodate other classes or clinical activities.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need the class to meet a degree requirement.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to take a class with a specific instructor.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to control the course pace and time of learning activities.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need schedule flexibility to accommodate my outside work schedule.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need schedule flexibility to accommodate sports or other extracurricular activities.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to work at home or remotely than to have to drive to campus.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to have the experience of taking an online course.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me, online classes are typically easier than traditional classes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn better in online classes than traditional classes.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central European Nations

Course Overview
An analysis of the political culture, political institutions, and organizations in Central Europe. This course will focus on the communist era, as well as the transition to democracy, and current affairs. In addition to comparisons across countries, issues such as democratization, dual transition, and democratic consolidation will be discussed.

Instructor Bio and Contact Information
Andrew Essig is a Professor of Political Science at DeSales University in Center Valley, PA. He received a B.A. in Economics (1989) from St. Joseph’s University, Philadelphia, PA; M.A. (1993) and Ph.D. (2001) in Political Science from Penn State University, University Park, PA. He studied 1994-1996 at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel, Germany through the DAAD. His current associational memberships include: Society of Catholic Social Scientists, University Faculty for Life, Association of Former Intelligence Officers, and International Association for Intelligence Education.

He has several published articles, including but not limited to:
- “John Paul II and the New International Order” Catholic Social Science Review
- “Catholic International Relations Theory” Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly
- “U.S.-Holy See Diplomacy” The Catholic Historical Review
- “The World Health Organization” and “The World Bank” published by the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (C-FAM)

His current area of interest includes the development of a core theory in international relations – Moral Realism. He teaches numerous courses in international relations, along with introductory courses in American Government and Political Philosophy. Dr. Essig lives in Allentown, PA.
Intro to Fiction Online – McKnight
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

• The collaborative design process

• Utilizing the right tools for the job

• Student technical support issues

• Adjusting the course in real time

• Where do we go from here?
Faculty Perspective

- The course design process
- Teaching an online course to the traditional age population
- The 15 week format
- Academic integrity issues / concerns
- Student academic performance relative to the classroom format
- Surprises
- What worked, what didn’t
- Advice for others contemplating taking this path
Discussion and Q & A

- The course development contract
- The course development process
- Academic integrity
- What worked and what didn't
- Course scheduling issues
- Advice for colleagues
- Other questions?
END-OF-COURSE SURVEY RESPONSES

• N = 56
• ~43% response rate
• Demographics
  ▪ Average student age = 20
  ▪ 82% sophomores or juniors
  ▪ Wide variety of majors (26% nursing)
  ▪ 41% commuters
  ▪ Most had never taken an online college course before
Getting online to access the course was easy

Technical support was available when I needed it

I sometimes had difficulty navigating the online environment (reverse scale)
I was able to communicate sufficiently with others
The learning activities encouraged contact between myself and my classmates
I developed a personal relationship with my instructor
I created social networks
I developed personal relationships with my classmates

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
The learning activities required me to think critically.
The class helped me understand the course material.
The learning activities were academically challenging.
The class helped me think more deeply about course material.

Perceived Rigor

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
“The class was boring.”
18% agreed | 14% neutral

“The class was a waste of time.”
7% agreed | 13% neutral
82% said they’d take another online course (5% neutral)

75% would recommend this course to a friend (16% neutral)

80% said participating in this course was a useful experience (7% neutral)
CONTACT US

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