

Teaching & Learning Insights from Spring 2020

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Successes, Failures, and Future Challenges

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Presentation Overview

- Lessons from the Sudden Transition
 - Anticipating Student Needs
- Spring Insights
 - Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Learning
 - Boise State STEM Faculty Survey
 - Faculty Evaluating Students
 - Students Evaluating Faculty
 - Adoption vs. Non-Adoption of Virtual Classes
- Challenges and Future Plans
 - National Faculty Survey
 - Strategies for Maximizing Engagement
 - Plans for the Fall
 - Distance Learning and Social Science Education

COVID-19 and the Sudden Transition

- The transition was met with last minute preparations
 - Ensuring that students took home books needed for study at home
 - Tying up loose ends (test results, reports, etc.)
 - Staff training, safeguarding arrangements, mutual communication and support mechanisms
- Importance of prioritizing reassurance to students and parents during crises
 - Targeted communication to address emotional and psychological challenges
 - Special efforts toward students with unsupportive home environments
 - More important than trying to learn new pedagogy/technology on the fly

Anticipating Student Needs when adopting Remote Learning

- Lesson from Spring: Different students have different needs
 - Transitioning students
 - Will not be able to complete their curricula/assessments normally
 - Abrupt separation from social groups
 - Mid-program students
 - Worries about how course/assessment schemes will be restored after crisis
 - Long term disadvantages compared to those who studied “normally”
 - Further levels of study
 - Entering labour market

Spring Insights: Asynchronous Learning

- Simple approach to remote learning
 - Participants do not have to communicate simultaneously
 - Gives instructors flexibility in preparing learning materials
 - Enables students to juggle demands of home and study
 - Short video lessons are easier to prepare and more effective (5-10 min)
- Asynchronous learning
 - On-demand access allows students to engage on their own schedule
 - Teachers can check progress periodically; students can book online appointments
- Boise State STEM Faculty Survey
 - 50% of teachers said mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning is a better approach
 - Students reported mixed feelings with both synchronous and asynchronous methods

Teachers Evaluating Students

- Assessment
 - Cancellation/suspension of many EOY exams leaving many students “left in the lurch”
 - Distance learning assessments as initial part of course construction
 - Clarifies learning objectives
 - Helps teachers determine which content to focus on/adopt
- Boise State STEM Faculty Survey
 - Almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of >50 respondents changed how they evaluated students
 - Sudden change negatively impacted student learning
 - Less engagement in virtual learning
 - Many professors offered flexibility due to uncertainty
 - Only time for doing, not thinking
 - $>\frac{2}{3}$ surveyed said more time would have made big difference

Students Evaluating Instructors

- Study of undergraduate evaluation surveys from 2018-20 at a small private college
 - Overall ratings of course and instructor increased by small but significant amt
 - Response rate decreased
 - Conclusion: Student evaluation means are unaffected by large scale changes to instruction or life experiences outside of teacher control
- Concerns about student evaluations were that faculty would be evaluated unfairly for sudden responsibilities
 - Student evaluations appear to be stable
 - Faculty do not need to be protected from pandemic-influenced student evaluations

Students Evaluating Teachers (cont.)

- Pandemic-related alterations to student evaluations varied by university
 - Ohio State added instructions for students and faculty to consider evaluation subjects “holistically”
 - Michigan added items about transition to online learning
 - FSU gave instructors the option to remove Spring 2020 evaluations from future consideration by evaluation committees
 - UHawaii faculty could opt out of evaluations
 - Marquette cancelled evaluations all together

Virtual Classes: Adoption vs. Non-Adoption

- Survey of higher ed faculty in India
 - Did adopt
 - Actual benefits < expected benefits
 - Network issues
 - Lack of training
 - Lack of awareness
 - Drawbacks
 - Lower attendance
 - Lack of personal touch
 - Lack of interaction (connectivity issues)
 - Did not adopt
 - Lack of awareness
 - Lack of interest
 - Doubts regarding usefulness of virtual classes

Spring Insights: National Faculty Survey

- Shift in perception of online learning during COVID-19
 - 45% grew more favorable toward online learning
 - 38% perception did not change
 - 17% grew less favorable toward online learning
- Presence of resources/infrastructure/support made transition smoother
 - Presence of centralized online learning unit
 - Instructional design staff
 - Peer to peer collaboration forum

Biggest Faculty Challenge in the Spring: Engagement

- National Faculty Survey results (cont.)
- Techniques to engage students online
 - 61% faculty said keeping students engaged was biggest challenge
 - 74% said increasing engagement is fall priority
- Support for transitioning instructional content and practice
 - Only 20% of faculty used 7 or more instructional practices (e.g. small group assignments, student self evals, live lectures, real world examples, personal messages, live sessions)
 - Small group assignments, student self-evaluations, real world examples, personal messages to students associated with higher instructor satisfaction with student learning
 - 1/3 of faculty (2/3 of first time online instructors) struggled to transition practice

Strategies for Maximizing Engagement: Motivation

- Create a strong presence
 - Be a role model to assuage discomfort or uncertainty about communicating in a virtual learning environment
- Help learners believe they can succeed
 - Boost motivation to create opportunities for quick wins early on and reward behaviors you want to encourage - reduce drop outs!
- Establish ways for students to monitor progress
 - Establish objectives, tie materials/assessments/materials to objectives, encourage tools for progress monitoring
- Build a sense of community
 - Collaborative activities and soliciting feedback to reduce feelings of isolation

Strategies for Maximizing Engagement: Effective Learning Experiences

- Base course activities on a trajectory that supports learning
 - Build on prior learning, practical applications of new knowledge beyond simple replication
- Apply learning principles that are likely to lead to better outcomes
 - Knowledge and skills defined, constructive activities, timely actionable feedback, avoid overload, leverage tech to personalize
- Relate the class to learners' lives
 - Everyday lives/career goals
- Plan effective interactions
 - Instructor-learner, learner-learner, and learner-content
- Support self-directed learning

Plans for the Fall: National Faculty Survey

- Fall priorities
 - Building a course that can be transitioned F2F/online
 - Redesigning course around online delivery
- Equity is a major concern
 - 51% of faculty changed learning outcomes, 71% moved to Pass/Fail
 - Foundation may not be truly mastered

Remote Learning and Social Science

- On a meta level, the impact of COVID-19 on social science education is an intriguing case study for social science and citizenship education itself
- Key questions on social science education and citizenship education
 - What is the impact of physical distance/virtual participation on topics/forms of learning in a domain that focuses on political and social debate, discussion and understanding?
 - How have remote teaching environments balanced collectivity and solidarity vs individualization and self-referentiality?
 - Who owns the virtual classroom and who set the rules?
 - What are the consequences for social and civic relationships among the students?
 - Will learner opportunities for intervention/interruption/resistance/disobedience increase or decrease?

References

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