



presents

Managing to Thrive in the Online Classroom

A Magna Online Seminar

Thursday, January 18, 2007

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM (Eastern)

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM (Central)

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (Mountain)

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM (Pacific)

Presented by:

Dr. Larry Ragan

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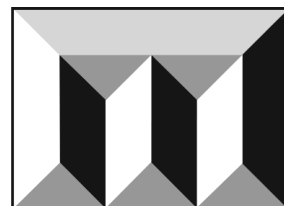
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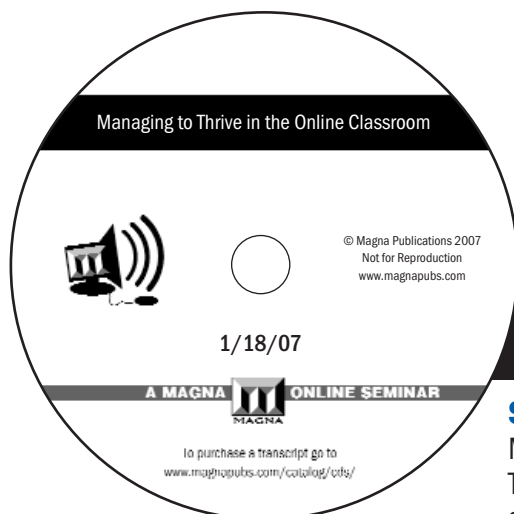
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Managing to Thrive in the Online Classroom



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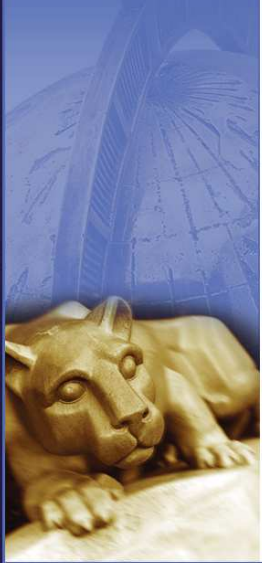
Meet the Presenter

Lawrence C. Ragan

Lawrence C. Ragan is the director of instructional design and development for Penn State's World Campus. Dr. Ragan is charged with directing the design and development of learning spaces for PSU online learners. He is responsible for directing the integration of a wide range of electronic media technologies into the instructional process in order to create dynamic, student-centered learning systems. Dr. Ragan coordinates the design and delivery of faculty development seminars and training programs for Penn State's World Campus. Dr. Ragan has taught for more than six years online and has designed and managed a variety of learning spaces.

Dr. Ragan is a frequent workshop coordinator and has presented internationally on the topics of instructional design, multimedia development, faculty development issues, and instructional design for distance education. Dr. Ragan has also served as the co-director of the EDUCAUSE Institute for Learning Technologies Leadership Program.

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Managing to Thrive in the Online Classroom

Simplifying the Complex

Session Objectives

- Share background of course management strategies (CMS) history
- Identify categories of CMS
- Share specific CMS
- Expand knowledge and practices of CMS strategies

Observations of CMS

- Most are already familiar—"good teaching is good teaching"
- Some are unique to online
- Technology creates new opportunities and problems
- Requires some creativity of application
- Many are developed in isolation without a format for sharing
- Born out of necessity!
- Faculty desire "path of least resistance" to obtaining educational outcomes

CMS Premise

- Good news: the online teaching and learning environment can be a rich and rewarding experience for faculty and students
- Bad news: the online teaching and learning environment can consume you (a.k.a., you have no life)

Big Question

- How do you craft a quality learning experience for the students and not let it become the “only thing you do”?

Difference between good and bad news:

- Time and resource management strategies
- The role of **INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

What are the causes of poor CMS?

- Well intentioned but misguided attempts at crafting the online learning event
- “Questionable” motives (I’d like to spend less time with those pesky students)
- Poor instructional design strategies
- Lack of understanding of performance expectations
- Lack of experience/knowledge of the dynamics of the online classroom

Course Management Strategies History

- Strategies for Managing the Online Workload Research study funded by Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
- Identified “categories” of time and resource management strategies
- Continue to add and refine findings

SMOW Process

- Conducted a broad survey of expert users
- Distilled results into categories and topics
- Consolidated input
- Organized data for refinement at the invitational conference
- Assimilated input into new document
- Disseminated findings

Four (+1) Categories

- Managing the Authoring Process
- Managing the Teaching Process
- Managing the Revision Process
- Institutional Strategies
- + Support Services

Further Breakdown of Categories

- Content Management
- Instruction/Pedagogy
- Managing the Authoring Process
- Managing the Delivery Process
- Managing the Revision Process
- Faculty-related Course Management Issues
- Student-related Course Management Issues

Content Management

- Strive for course completion before you start delivery
- Be smart about managing dynamic content—design where and how
- Be “content creative”—don’t need to create all from scratch
- Don’t “tie the knot too tightly”
- Think through content logistics

Content Management

- Develop a checklist for faculty reviewing content sources
- Develop theme based-modules
- Develop a master author to address revisions—store in accessible repository
- Shared repository-modules—issue of version control
- Produce materials for use in f-to-f
- Prototype materials in f-to-f
- Use of shared space for managing dynamic materials
- Create a constructivist model (shift to student-centered activities where possible)
- Schedule a course “down time”
- Date stamp materials
- Create a “what’s new?” space

Instruction/Pedagogy

- Keep the comparisons (between f-to-f and online) to a minimum
- Ask the question “how to make **THIS** environment the best it can be?”
- Seek new and emerging strategies of effective pedagogy
- “Use” student resources where/when possible and appropriate

Instruction/Pedagogy

- Carefully plan interactions
- Seek the balance of content delivery and “instruction”
- Establish clear boundaries of interactions
- Establish clear expectations of learners

Instruction/Pedagogy-5 facets

- **Content**
 - Be consistent and predictable
 - Establish expectations
 - Define parameters of content
 - Take advantages of the online capabilities
- **Instruction**
 - Be present and active
- **Interactions**
 - Control the interactions (where, when, why)
- **Student Activities (assignments)**
 - Frequency and duration
- **Evaluation and Assessment Techniques**
 - Self-check/low stake vs. graded
 - Be creative

Instructional/Pedagogy

- Other input . . .

Authoring Process

- Understand the course operating parameters
- Define a course development model/template
- Make use of existing course resources
- Provide clear/concise instructions
- Use project management processes
- Find the balance between “new and used”

Authoring Process

- Other input . . .

Delivery Process

- Create an “instructional buffer”—sequential reveals
- Define performance expectations
- Defined required student competencies
- Use “orientation” period
- Establish a routine
- Maximize LMS tools and systems
- Foster group dynamics (where appropriate)

Delivery Process

- Three most important delivery techniques:
- Communicate, communicate, and communicate!

Delivery Process

- Other input . . .

Revision Process

- Resist the allure of new and emerging technologies/pedagogies
- Use Continuous Quality Improvement strategies to gain and consider suggestions
- Design for revisions—modular content structure
- Stop, look and listen—be observant and record issues as they occur for future reference
- Plan/schedule for the revision cycle—budget time and resources
- Use student evaluation data

Revision Process

- Other input . . .

Faculty-related Issues

- Identify competencies for online teaching
- Assess “readiness” of faculty for this environment
- Invest in faculty development—technology and pedagogy
- Provide faculty time and location management ideas (help establish parameters)
- Provide guidance on interactions management

Faculty-related Issues

- Establish a support system/network (team teach, peer-to-peer, mentoring, staff support, greenhouse)
- Provide mechanism for administrators for selecting “best-fit” faculty

Faculty Related Issues

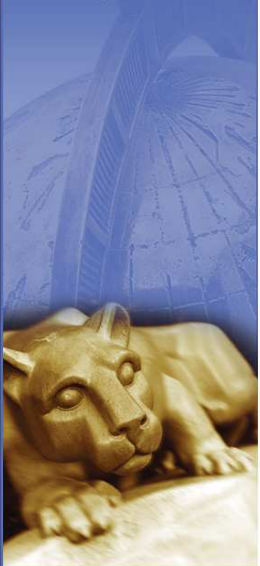
- Other input . . .

Student-related Issues

- The well-prepared learner (articulate the skills and competencies you expect)
- Provide instructions (over-explain) and examples
- Use communications environments as a design strategy
- Establish the boundaries for student behavior
- Use the power of the CMS to the advantage of the student
- Push responsibility for learning to students

Student-related Issues

- Other input . . .



Thank you!

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Effective Workload Management Strategies for the Online Environment

A Report Funded by a Grant from The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to The Pennsylvania State University World Campus

Project Dates: February 2002-December 2002

Report edited by

Lawrence C. Ragan, Ph.D., Project Director

Sara L. Terheggen, Ph.D., Project Manager

April 15, 2003

Executive Summary

“Effective Workload Management Strategies for the Online Environment” is a report outlining research conducted by The Pennsylvania State University’s World Campus, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan foundation. A selection of the most effective workload management strategies, chosen by experienced online educators from national and international institutes of learning, are divided into the following four categories: (1) Authoring Strategies, (2) Teaching Strategies, (3) Course Improvement and Revision Strategies, and (4) Institutional Strategies. All four of these areas are important to the success of an online teaching program, and institutions interested in using the strategies are encouraged to customize them to their own needs, and cultivate flexibility, creativity, and teamwork in this effort.

These strategies serve as the basis of an evolving process to collect and catalog a variety of feedback from experienced online educators in how they reduce the amount of time and energy in the online environment. It is expected that the original four categories identified through this project will expand as will the number of strategies identified in each category. As new information becomes available, workshops are conducted, and experienced is gained, the subsequent editions will reflect growing knowledge about how to manage the online workload. The desire is that new practitioners of online education can benefit from this recorded expertise.

The most effective authoring strategies collected from faculty experienced in online teaching include adopting a course development model, identifying and acquiring existing learning resources, establishing and distributing reusable templates, providing the course author with a sample online course, providing students with specific

instruction for assignments, applying project planning and management methods to the course development process, establishing a course development team, designing balanced instructional activities, finalizing one module or unit before developing the remainder of the course, developing rubrics for each graded student assignment, and creating a learning object database. Depending on the type of institution and the resources available, some of the recommended strategies for reducing faculty workload during the course development period may be preferred over others. The institution, by no means, has to use all of the strategies. In general, a combination of strategies customized for the particular institution will work best, and with each new course under development further customization and flexibility will help to streamline the process.

The most effective strategies for reducing faculty workload during the teaching phase of online instruction include clarifying and enhancing students' technical skills before registration, providing a detailed syllabus, defining the operating parameters of the course, creating feedback rubrics, establishing a routine, incorporating a learning management system for recording course transactions, fostering group dynamics within the course, beginning the course with an activity that encourages interaction, and establishing consistent, effective methods of electronic communication. Teaching strategies focus on making sure the audience is ready for the material (and helping them to hone their technological skills if not), providing high quality communication in both the instructional and the interactive aspects of the course, and developing streamlined methods for managing course events and transactions. Here again, depending on the type of institution and the course material itself, some teaching strategies may prove more useful than others, and flexibility and customization are recommended to create optimum workload efficiency.

It is easy to overlook course revision and improvement strategies while in the throes of new development, but as the institution progresses through development of a selection of courses and programs the inevitability of course revision becomes apparent. Proper management of resources includes projecting the volume and frequency of revision necessary and budgeting accordingly. Recommended strategies to reduce faculty workload and avoid the pressure of overcommitment include conducting multiple evaluations of the courses, conducting a pilot run or initiating an expert internal review before release of the course, managing the revision cycle as an integral part of the course, developing methods for managing dynamic course elements (updates), inviting student feedback at the close of the course, developing and maintaining a course history, involving the original course author in the revision process, and rewarding students for reporting errors in the course material.

Institutional strategies form the foundation of successful development of online instruction. Without the support of the institution, faculty struggle under unmanageable workloads, prohibitive costs, isolation, and time-consuming learning curves involving new technologies. Successful strategies for institutional support of faculty include ensuring faculty access to instructional design and systems support, providing adequate faculty development opportunities, providing technical support for faculty and students, providing an adequate learning management system, establishing institutional parameters

for online operation, integrating institutional administrative systems and tools, providing clear institutional policies on intellectual property rights, defining the role of online education in the mission of the institution, developing institutional policy for compensating and rewarding faculty and academic units, and providing copyright and permissions support and policies.

Careful application of these strategies to the needs of online educators can significantly enhance the success of the online education program. “Effective Workload Management Strategies for the Online Environment” is an evolving set of such strategies, a work in progress, and new strategies will be added as the history of online education progresses.

The full report “Effective Workload Management Strategies for the Online Environment” is available at
www.ed.psu.edu/ACSDE/Workload_Man.ement_Strat_5.pdf.