

Online Teaching in Education, Health and Human Services

HELPING FACULTY TRANSITION
TO ONLINE INSTRUCTION AND
PROVIDING TOOLS FOR
ATTAINING INSTRUCTIONAL
EXCELLENCE



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**ONLINE TEACHING IN EDUCATION,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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ONLINE TEACHING IN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Helping Faculty Transition to Online Instruction and Providing Tools for
Attaining Instructional Excellence

By

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and

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PREFACE

As online education continues to grow, it is necessary to prepare instructors to teach in the online environment. Most instructor development focuses on technical education and not on strategies to engage and inspire the online student. The critical success of online instructors is their ability to engage students in the learning process. With this expertise, the online experience is extremely effective. The strength of the book lies in guiding the instructor to take on the role of facilitator. We have chosen to focus solely on the role of the instructor. Learning to be student-centered is the first step in becoming a successful online instructor. The intent of this book is to help faculty understand the processes of teaching online.

Our goal is for the online instructor to have access to simple and practical tips and best practices for teaching in a student-centered learning environment. In online education, students need to assume responsibility for their own learning. The use of online interactive tools such as asynchronous discussion boards and synchronous chats by instructors are the foundation of online learning. This book details not only what instructors must learn to provide a student-centered course, but how to do it with ease and confidence.

There are a number of reasons that instructors choose teaching online courses as a career choice. We wanted to provide a view of the role of the instructor and how to start and end a course. Throughout our own experience, it has become clear that too many instructors did not know how to interact online and how to develop a student-centered learning environment. We saw a need to help instructors develop a presence in a course and improve student participation and interaction. We wanted to provide tips and strategies for online instructors that could be used directly. Often instructors have little or no experience in online instructional environments and little time to prepare for online teaching. This book can be a valuable resource for these instructors who are planning a gradual transition from the face-to-face environment to online environments. For institutions requiring online instructors

to complete a course or program prior to teaching online, this guide can be used as a resource during the training program and as an ongoing resource after the initial training.

In summary, the audience for this book is instructors who are moving into the online environment for the first time, or who seek to improve their online teaching presence. Strategies and suggestions for teaching online are explored. This book focuses on understanding (a) who online students are, (b) how they learn, and (c) what they have to overcome to achieve their educational goals online. It is our hope that this book will transform the development of online instruction and offer a hands-on approach to online education.

M.M.
D.M.

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This book presents not only our ideas but those of the many individuals who have helped us in the various K-12, colleges and corporations where we have worked. Special thanks for the contributions by Dr. Paige Krabill of Capella University in Chapters 8 and 10. Besides our work at various corporations seeking online teaching environments, we would like to thank Walden, Capella and Youngstown State Universities for providing exceptional educational experiences for their students and a rich faculty experience.

AN INVITATION

Please let us know how you use this book. Also, if you have some additional experience that you would like to share in future editions, please contact Don at dmartin@ysu.edu or Magy at magy.martin@waldenu.edu. We look forward to hearing from you.

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**ONLINE TEACHING IN EDUCATION,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Chapter ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE INSTRUCTION

- A Profile of Online Students
- Traditional Instruction vs Online Instruction
- Online Instruction
- Some Myths About Online Teaching
- Online Instructor Skill Set
- Challenges in the Online Classroom
- Some Basics the Online Instructor Needs to Know
- Developing a Course Schedule: How to Structure Your Work Schedule

Most college faculty are varied and come from numerous locations with different cultural experiences and expertise. These faculty generally represent a variety of different backgrounds and goals when they make the choice to teach online. For example, a new online instructor may be:

- A tenured faculty member with decades of teaching experience
- An assistant professor facing the need to teach, do research and meet tenure requirements
- An untenured faculty member with a substantial teaching load
- A part-time adjunct faculty member with content expertise and little teaching experience
- An adjunct faculty member who will be teaching the occasional course online

Each of these instructors has found online teaching as an opportunity to have a different student-centered dialogue with students and more flexibility within their schedules (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010). But it can be a difficult journey particularly if the instructor has not been prepared or has been used to a traditional on-campus experience. Online teaching is a different model of teaching with its own rules and expectations. This book will help the new instructor to make that transition and help them answer many of the questions they might have. But first, let's take a look at the online student.

A PROFILE OF ONLINE STUDENTS

According to the Sloan Consortium report *Learning on Demand: Online Education in the United States* (Allen & Seaman, 2009), the percentage of students taking an online course continues to grow. The key report findings are:

- Over one-half (54%) of institutions report that the economic downturn has increased demand for existing face-to-face courses.
- The economic impact has been greatest on demand for online courses with 66% of organizations reporting increased demand for new courses and programs and 73% seeing increased demand for existing online courses and programs.
- The economic impact on institutional budgets has been mixed; 50% have seen their budgets decrease, while 25% have experienced an increase.

Online students may process information differently because of their familiarity with the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet (Prensky, 2001). Many of them are happy with engaging in multiuser environments. They use their imagination and creativity freely and openly. They work, play, and compete with people around the world and they understand the levels of engagement, collaboration, interactivity, access, and instant feedback (Vai & Sosulski, 2011). These students:

- Enjoy studying a subject alone and appreciate the asynchronous environment where several things are occurring at different times.

- Seek flexibility to choose the time and place to learn that is most suitable for them.
- Are unable to enroll in regular, traditional classes due to time and other constraints.
- Expect faculty to assist them through the course materials and discussions.
- Appreciate the option of researching their assignments on the Internet.
- Range in digital experience from newcomer to competent.
- Can be international students with a variation of cultures and first languages.
- Have remarkably little experience with writing or may have difficulties with writing, structure and the use of grammar.

In online student-centered classes, these students will experience a variety of levels of interaction with learning materials. Students have strong preferences for organizing and independence. They must be self-directed in achieving their educational goals while balancing other responsibilities or they will not succeed.

TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTION VS ONLINE INSTRUCTION

For most students, traditional instruction entails a typical classroom environment where the instructor regularly teaches classes at a predetermined time and place. The instructor focuses on providing lectures that may be followed by question and answer sessions. This regular classroom provides a number of benefits that most students expect.

PROS

- **Access to college facilities** such as office space, the library, and traditional classroom buildings.
- **Social interaction and discussions with other instructors** allows for team building. Instructors are able to meet with students before, during or after class to resolve issues regarding a particular lesson.
- **The time commitment** is understood whether attending each class, going to faculty meetings, or having summer or winter va-