Migrating Courses to an Online Format

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ABSTRACT

This session is designed to present a proposed methodology for converting university courses currently available as face-to-face courses (conducted in a physical location such as a classroom and/or computer lab) to 100% online courses (conducted via the Internet in an online course environment). The information presented includes the specific steps recommended to facilitate the migration of course content and student assessment from classroom delivery to a course delivered exclusively via online access.

PROPOSAL

In migrating traditional (face-to-face) courses to online courses, it is extremely important for faculty to understand that they are not being asked to develop new course material. The key is to take the existing course syllabus and convert the communication, assignments, discussion, projects, and evaluation to the online medium. Faculty must always retain the core learning goals and objectives as the academic integrity of the course is paramount, regardless of format. A conceptual overview of the recommended steps for this methodology will be presented in the context of a flowchart.

Before a faculty commits to the development of online courses, individual readiness should be assessed in regards to:
• pedagogical considerations;
• motivation;
• time commitment; and
• technological competency.

Pedagogical considerations are the substantive pillars in online course migration and development in that the use of technology must never supersede those considerations. As faculty, an important question is: what pedagogical benefits can the utilization of technology bring to the teaching and learning processes? Failure to consider pedagogical issues with technology in teaching could potentially corrupt the core of the learning objectives.

In order to take full advantage of what technology offers in the teaching and learning process, faculty should align technology use with the goals of teaching. Such alignment requires that the following four areas be considered:
• course goals and course activities;
• course activities and course evaluation;
- course evaluation and course goals; and
- engaged teaching and engaged learning.

(Sun, 2004)

Motivation for designing and using online courses varies with faculty. Areas that are considered to be of primary motivation: desire to learn to utilize technology to enhance teaching, expand student learning opportunities, create more engaging learning opportunities, and experiment with technology to discover its potential in teaching effectiveness in general (Leh, 2002).

Time commitment is a critical factor for faculty when faced with the prospect of migrating or developing online courses. More often than not, faculty indicates that they are pressed for time relative to their duties involving teaching, research, and service. However, the initial time requirement for online course development can become an investment for time saved in the future, i.e., when the implemented online courses actually begin to save time for faculty. It is strongly encouraged that faculty be informed at the beginning of the process as to the actual time required for electronic communication with students. The “24/7” availability of students to faculty, either asynchronous or synchronous, can require more time for faculty-student interaction and contact as a recommended component of the delivery process for online courses (NCES, 2002).

The technological competency required of faculty refers to the basic skills that would enable the faculty to perform the tasks for developing and maintaining an online course. Such requirements are often the primary obstacle in a faculty’s decision whether to teach online courses or not. An appropriate evaluation of faculty technical skills is highly recommended to help determine readiness and identify the skills needed to accomplish different tasks.