In general, faculty believe in active learning modes, and promoting higher-order thinking. In many cases, they believe that they are already trying to accomplish both goals, but in reality the controlling variable is coverage of material. Consequently, our observation is that faculty will try to tweak a course with learning activities added here and there, but the net change still approaches zero. This was true with Biology 100, a required general education course at BYU. Although they added elements of active learning that were intended to elicit higher-order thinking, an internal survey revealed that the course as a whole still emphasized lower-order skills, especially memorization. Student evaluations of the course remained unchanged and continued to reveal what might be termed lower-order attitudes.

These facts made the faculty amenable to course redesign. At the outset they were willing to change course strategy and tactics, however, just as there should be alignment between goals, learning activities, and assessment; there should also be alignment between course goals, teacher beliefs and practices, and student roles and responsibilities. It was at this level that change was needed before the tactical changes were effective. It was also at this level that change was most uncomfortable.

Dealing with these issues is applicable to instruction in the classroom, online, or in a hybrid setting. In this presentation we will discuss, the challenges that this “two-triangular” change presented as well as the outcomes of the Winter 2006 pilot of the redesigned Biology 100 course.