Teaching Online in an Open Access College: Best Practices to Overcome Challenges

An open admissions institution, providing access to higher education to anyone with a high school diploma or equivalency, has unique challenges in delivering courses online. There are major differences in the mission and the student body of an open admission institution compared to a traditional educational institution. Instructors cannot assume that all students would possess the basic computer literacy skills that are required for success in online classes. The digital divide is more pronounced in such a campus where students with varying technical skills are enrolled. Williams and Japzon (2007) have commented on the impact of technology on non-traditional students. Yet, it is precisely such students who benefit most from the flexibility offered by online classes as most of them have busy professional and personal lives. This presentation deals with the technical and pedagogical obstacles to student success in online classes at an open admissions institution and best practices to overcome them.