Title: Improving the quality of online non-credit adult education course

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Description:
The objective in teaching a non-credit course is not to award a grade; however, that
is never truly the objective of any effective course. In this case, administrative
professionals in the field take an online course offered by the distance education
department in a major research university in the U.S. to help them prepare for the
Certified Administrative Professional exam administered by the International
Association of Administrative Professionals. Thus, the purpose for this non-credit
course is to best prepare these working adults for the exam, instead of passing this
course itself. Nonetheless, non-credit courses are not fundamentally different from
their credit counterpart. Both need to help students master the knowledge
presented.

In this session, the presenters will discuss and demonstrate best practices in
designing and delivering an online non-credit course. The best practices for success
include: course orientation, logical course organization, clear learning objectives,
aligning other course components with learning objectives, designing appropriate
learning activities and assessments, designing and facilitating online learning
communities, and providing support and resources to learners. In addition, we will
discuss issues encountered in this online course as well as our solutions to these
issues. For instance, we found that some of the major issues within this course were:
students avoided ungraded assignments and learning activities; some of them
procrastinated in this self-paced course and eventually failed to complete; and
challenges to accommodate students with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
The distance education department in this public university was established in
1998. Over the past decade, there are more than 200,000 enrollments in distance
education courses. Although this is a non-credit online course, it went through
similar instructional design, development, and implementation process as credit
online courses. Demonstration of this course should inform participants how
instructional designer and instructor worked together to create online courses.
General online learning strategies, techniques, issues, solutions, and courseware can
be drawn from this example course.