Distance Learning: Engaging the Millennium Student

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Basic Idea:

- Students and Teachers are in different places for all or most of the time that they learn and teach.
- They depend on some kind of technology to deliver information and provide a way of interacting with each other.
- The *use of technology has removed barriers of time and space*, facilitating the delivery of information that is *just right, just enough, and just in time.*
Why Distance Education? [NCES]

- Nearly 1/3 of all colleges and universities reported in 1997 had some form of distance education
  [National Center for Education Statistics]

- 54,470 distance education courses offered in 1997-98 academic year by 2-year and 4-year institutions

- In 1999-2000, 60% participated through the internet; 39% through prerecorded audio and video;

- Global Education and Training Market is currently estimated at $2 trillion [Computer Industry Almanac 2006]
  - USA share $740 billion
Why Distance Learning? [NCES]

- Females more likely to participate;
- Students generally over the age of 24;
- Students are busy with work and family;
- **Increased demand** for College Education
- Emerging technologies have made DL **practical and cost effective**
- Anytime access to both faculty and students;
Growth Rate

- Current estimation: approximately 10% of the overall training and education market in all sectors.
- Expected growth for online students – by 12% by end of 2008;
- In 10 years - most students will spend at least part of their school days in a virtual class, grouped online with others who share their interest, mastery and skills;
Students - Distance Education

- Students are different than those in the traditional classroom.
  - Need different study skills
  - Need different communication skills
  - Need different kinds of support
  - Need help with different kinds of problems

- Best students:
  - Classification: (Fresh, Soph, Junior, Senior, Grads)
  - Age: (Younger vs. Older)
  - Personality differences
Instructor Roles

- Teaching Functions:
  - Elaborating course content
  - Supervising and moderating discussions
  - Supervising individual and group projects

- Student Progress
  - Grading Assignments and providing feedback on progress
  - Keeping student records
  - Helping students manage their study!!!!!
  - Motivating students!!!
Instructor Roles:

- Learner Support
  - Answering or referring administrative questions
  - Answering or referring technical questions
  - Answering or referring counseling questions
  - Representing students with the administration

- Evaluating Course Effectiveness
Millennium Student

- Raised on technology
- First generation to grow up with computers in home and school
- Spend 1/3 of their lives on the Internet (email, chat rooms, Facebook, MySpace)
- Preferred forms of communication (email and instant messaging)
- Demand quick and instant gratification
Millennium Student

- They tend to Facebook through most of their classes
- Bring laptops to most of their classes (not working on class work);
- Read more Facebook profiles, WebPages than books;
- Fulltime students with part time jobs;
- Use of Online books;

[www.researchandmarkets.com]
Engaging these Students

- Easier???
- More Difficult??
Interaction  [Kent Brooks, Western Oklahoma State College]

- **Three Types of Interaction**
  - **Learner to Content**
    - Role of the instructor is to support and assist each student as he or she interacts with the content and converts it to personal knowledge.
  - **Learner to Instructor**
    - Ability to *humanize the relationship* with distant learners is important.
    - *Stimulating the students’ interest*
    - *Responding* to all student queries promptly (within 24 hours).
    - *Detailing the understanding of content* to ensure correct application of content.
    - *Evaluation/Feedback*.
  - **Student to Student**
    - *Student Group interaction*: virtual.
Tele-techniques:

Humanizing

Participation

Feedback

Delivery

Evaluation
Design Components

- Humanizing
  - is the process of creating an atmosphere that focuses on the importance of the individual and overcomes distance by generating group/class rapport;

- Participation
  - in teleconferencing is defined as the process of getting beyond the technology by providing opportunities for spontaneous interaction among participants
Design Components

- Feedback
  - *It helps in correcting misunderstandings and filling in omissions*

- Delivery
  - is presenting what is to be said in such a way that it will be *received, understood and remembered*

- Evaluation
  - is the process of getting information about the message which helps you and the participants complete the communications loop;
    - Student
    - Faculty
Engineering Student Participation

- Discussion Groups
- Quizzes
- Students given opportunity to ask or answer questions
- Students given opportunity to express opinions
- Student assignments
  - Allow students to ask and receive responses to questions
    - Feedback allows instructor to establish a sense of participation
    - Links instructor to the student, student to student
    - Key program evaluation
Assignments: Student Expectations

- Fair and objective grading
- Have their work treated with respect
- An explanation and justification of the grade awarded
- **A clear indication of how they can improve both in terms of specific responses to questions and in general**
- *Encouragement and reassurance about their ability and progress*
- Constructive criticism and advice
- An opportunity to respond if desired
- A timely response (before next assignment is due)
Things that Work!

- The Syllabus Sign-off Sheet - ensures accountability
- During the first week of class - ask students to update Blackboard with a phone number and a CORRECT e-mail address (this ensures that I can reach them)
- Having an introduction discussion board w/pictures during first week of class - puts a face to the name.
Things that Work

- Having a weekly discussion board question/response - this gives an interactive feeling to the class even though it is online.
- Having a discussion board topic dedicated to questions - this allowed everyone to benefit from the answer.
- Requiring students to work on their project in phases rather than one huge deal at the end - this made them think about it early on in the semester.
Things that Work

- Giving students my cell phone number - even though they often called at crazy times - it was a "lifeline" for them when a quick response was needed.

- My "no late work accepted" policy - ensures that I get assignments in a timely fashion (rather than a bunch at the end of the semester).

- Online attendance
Things that Don’t Work

- Group projects - inevitably one person would do all/most of the work while everyone got the credit. (Classroom as well)

- Offering extra credit options too early in the semester.

- Allowing deadlines to slide without penalty.

- Emailed assignments;
Questions

- Effectiveness??
- Percentage of students who successfully complete??
- Integrity of assignments and exams??
- Target Audience?
- HU Students?
- Can this work??
Conclusions