# Course Preparation for Online Learning: What Faculty Should Know

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# of courses taught using DE/OL tech

What is DE/OL?

What electronic tools are used? (check all that apply)

What electronic tools are used?

PPT Slide

Taught same course F2F & DL

Which Medium Requires Most Time Involvement

Average additional time per week

How much more time preparing for entire distance course?

Average additional time per course

Value of F2F aspect of DE/OL

Which format yields the greatest return on instructor investment?

Optimal DE/OL class size?

Plans to continue DE/OL

How can your campus help? - 1

How can your campus help? - 2

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

Conclusion

Conclusion

Future Research
Course Preparation for Online Learning:
What Faculty Should Know

Presented by:
Barbara McKenzie, Nancy Mims, Elizabeth Bennett
University of West Georgia

Michael Waugh
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SITE Conference – Nashville, TN. – March 19, 2002

Slide 1 of 40
Purpose of the Research

- To determine selected perceptions of higher education instructors in Georgia who are engaged in distance education/online (DE/OL) teaching & learning efforts
  - Practices
  - Problems
  - Solutions
Two Year Study

- 1st year – Pilot study (2000)
  - State University of West Georgia
    - All faculty surveyed 1999 - 2000

- 2nd year – Extended study (2001)
  - Selected universities in Georgia who utilize distance technologies
    - Volunteer participants electronically surveyed 2000-2001

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Background

- Distributed learning is challenging
  - Different from F2F format
- Faculty play a key role in its success
- A number of factors influence faculty choice
  - Personal vs. ordered
  - Incentives/ values towards distance tech
  - Success with students/ instructors

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DL Incentives in the Literature

- Flexible working conditions
- Reaching students at a distance
- Worldwide audience
- Fun
- Enhancement of technology skills
- Increased job satisfaction
Barriers to DL Instruction

- Decreased interaction with students
- Increased work time/ lack of time to prepare for classes
- Lack of support & assistance with courses
- Time consuming to learn technology skills
- Inadequate compensation
Population Surveyed

- Legitimate sample of DE/OL “pioneers” in Georgia
  - All faculty at UWG using WebCT
  - Faculty in GA who participate in a WebCT listserv
  - Faculty in the middle GA geographic region who participate in a listserv moderated at CSU
  - Other GA faculty -- contacted by peers

- Knowledge/perceptions based upon experience
- Collectively taught approximately 300 courses via DE/OL
Instrument for 2nd Study

- Survey modified from 2001 instrument
  - Put into an electronic format
  - Additional demographic & distance questions questions added

- Open & closed-ended questions

- Online pilot testing
  - Three distance experts

- Revised before distribution
Factors Explored

- Background of DE instructors
  - Where employed?
  - Department?
  - Rank?
  - Gender?
  - Years taught in higher education?
  - Hours of training in distance?
  - # of courses taught via distance technologies?
Factors Explored

- Technologies used for distance teaching?
- Training received?
- Experience in teaching courses both F2F & through distance technologies?
- Teaching format preferred?
- Optimal class size?
- Importance of f2f meetings?
- Assistance needed to be effective in teaching with technology?
Data Collection & Analysis

- **Online Surveys**
  - Sent to UWG faculty - April 2000
  - Sent to two listservs that linked WebCT & distance users around the state – May 2000

- **Reminders sent after 2 weeks**
- **SPSS/ closed-ended questions**
- **Content analysis/open-ended questions**

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Sample Population
(19 institutions; 66 participants)

- University of West Georgia (12)
- Southern Polytechnic State University (8)
- Georgia Perimeter (7)
- Valdosta State University (7)
- Medical College of Georgia (5)
- Georgia College and State University (4)
- Floyd College (4)
- Middle Georgia College (3)
- Albany State University (2)
Sample Population

- Armstrong Atlantic (3)
- Georgia College (2)
- Georgia Southwestern (2)
- Georgia State University (1)
- Darton College (1)
- Waycross (1)
- Bainbridge (1)
- South Georgia (1)
- Kennesaw (1)
- Coastal Georgia Community College (1)
Sample constraints

- Not random
- Not constructed
- Self-selected!
- Representative ???
  - Uncertain
Who responded?

- **Gender**
  - Female (n=32) / Male (n=32)
  - Not reported (n=2)

- **Ranks**
  - Professor (n=17)
  - Associate Prof. (n=17)
  - Assistant Prof. (n=23)
  - Instructor (n=5)
  - Adjunct (n=4)
Who responded? - Field

- Health, Nursing and Medical (n=19, 29%)
- Language, Social Science and Humanities (n=15, 23%)
- Education (n=12, 18%)
- Math and Science (n=9, 14%)
  Business (n=7, 11%)
- Engineering (n=4, 6%)

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Who responded? - Years of Experience

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Why motivated to begin using distance technologies?

- Students & technology (<i>involvement with tech.</i>) = 39
- > Quality of course = 36
- Meet student needs at a distance = 35
- Student demand for distance = 32
- Flexibility in working cond. = 27
- > Interaction with students = 20
- It was required = 17
Training Received – Prior to Teaching

• No training (n=15, 23%)
• 1-5 hours (n=19, 29%)
• 6-10 hours (n=13, 20%)
• 11-15 hours (n=2, 3%)
• 16-20 hours (n=4, 6%)
• 20+ hours (n=13, 20%)
# of courses taught using DE/OL tech

- **Classes taught:**
  - 14 faculty = 1 class, 15 fac. = 2 classes,
  - 5 fac. = 3 classes, 4 fac. = 4 classes,
  - 5 fac. = 5 classes, 6 fac. = 6 classes,
  - 2 fac. = 7 classes, 8 fac. = 2 classes,
  - 1 fac. = 10 classes,
  - 11 fac. = > 10 classes, 1 fac. = no resp.

- **Eimodal**
  - Approx. 45%
    - taught 1 or 2 courses
  - Approx. 20%
    - taught 10 or more courses
What is DE/OL?

- Respondents offered similar definitions
- These definitions included the following concepts:
  - use of electronic media (GSAMS, Internet, others) for conducting much or all of a course;
  - teachers/learners separated by time and/or space,
  - interactions synchronous and asynchronous
What electronic tools are used?  
(check all that apply)

- WebCT, GSAMS, Web Course-in-a-Box,  
  TopClass, Blackboard, Lotus Notes  
- Others...  
  - html-coded materials  
  - Internet e-mail, private e-mail  
  - Bulletin boards, conferencing systems,  
  - Internet newsgroups, MUD or MOO environments,  
  - Listservs, web-based course calendar, chat rooms
What electronic tools are used?

- First time with a DE/OL course
  - 41 unique combinations of electronic tools reported
- Most Recent time with DE/OL course
  - 36 unique combinations of electronic tools reported
Taught same course F2F & DL

- 86% of sample taught the identical course in both instructional environments.
- Preferences
  - 53% prefer a mix of both.
  - 22% prefer F2F
  - 15% prefer neither one
  - 10% prefer DE/OL.
Which Medium Requires Most Time Involvement

Total Sample...
- DE/OL -- 89%
- F2F -- 2%
- Both (equally time consuming) -- 9%
Average additional time per week
How much more time preparing for entire distance course?

- 1-3 hrs. = 15
- 4-6 hrs. = 20
- 7-9 hrs. = 8
- 10-12 hrs. = 11
- 13-15 hrs.
- 16 or > hrs. = 2

More clarification needed next study

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Average additional time per course

- N = 39 responses
- Mean = 59.47 hours per course
- s. d. = 56.49 hours per course
- MANY hours but highly variable across instructors
Value of F2F aspect of DE/OL

- 81% report that F2F is a valuable component of their DE/OL classes.
- 19% report the F2F is NOT a valuable component of their DE/OL classes.
Which format yields the greatest return on instructor investment?

- F2F (n=23, 38%)
- Electronically-mediated teaching (n=15, 25%)
- A mix of the above two (n=5, 8%)
- Depends on the course (n=4, 7%)
- Both are equal (n=3, 5%)
- Depends on the students (n=9, 15%)
- Depends on the course and students (n=2, 3%)

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Optimal DE/OL class size?

- N = 53 responses
- Mean (ideal class size) = 19.8 students
- Range = 43
- Standard Deviation = 7.7
- Approximately 12-28 depending on the level of students, course and interaction desired/required.
Plans to continue DE/OL

- 86% report plans to continue teaching using DE/OL technologies.
- 6% report plans NOT to continue teaching using DE/OL technologies.
- 8% were uncertain.

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How can your campus help? - 1

- Plan and then institute programs, not vice versa.
- Continue support for effort
- More support, release time
- More tech support; new technologies
- Reduce class sizes
- Stop insisting on specific technologies (WebCT)
- Address materials ownership issues
- Recognize effort required; factor in to teaching load
How can your campus help? - 2

• Provide more training
• Require students to take intro. computer class
• Recognize student variables related to electronic formats
• Acknowledge efforts in terms of P&T, prof. effort
• Student assistant help
• Stress development of hybrid classes (not 100% DL)
• Eliminate institutional control
Lessons Learned

- DE/OL (instruction mediated through one or more forms of technology) can provide a rich (richer?) instructional experience
  - a cost associated with this gain
    - If > interaction with students > time involvement for instructor
Lessons Learned

• **F2F interactions** with students are highly valued.

• When possible, use mixed instructional models
  - (partially F2F and partially DE/OL).

• The necessity of F2F is unclear but its value may far outweigh its inconvenience/expense.
Conclusion

- **Reduce class sizes** in DE/OL (to enable greater interaction with the instructor)
- **Factor increased instructor effort into workload and personnel policies**
- **Increase support** for faculty engaged in this effort, (i.e., TAs, technical support, development support)
- **OR, expect DE/OL efforts to be less interactive; potentially less successful**
Conclusion

- Use appropriate media for appropriate aspects of the instruction.
- Arranging for physical meetings may be awkward when students reside a considerable distance from the instructor
  - such meetings may be critical to the success of the instruction.
Future Research

- Extend the study to other states to enlarge the database and exploratory findings
- Contact information
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