Office of Online Education Newsletter

Spring, 2017

Message from the Director

Welcome to our 2nd edition of the Online Education Newsletter. For those of you who missed the first one, we noted that we will be sending out a newsletter each semester going over a wide range of topics revolving around online education. We want this to not only be informative, but also become a helpful tool in opening up dialogue in best practices, current regulations and future directions in online learning. This edition includes different tips, perspectives and practices from DSU faculty who share their thoughts and ideas on both teaching and learning online.

As the world of online education continues to experiment with the latest and greatest in academic and student services activities, we continue to try to keep one step ahead and not fall stagnant. This semester we will be offering our first ever career service events directed specifically for online students. These events will be conducted via Skype sessions and will include assistance with mock interview skills and resume writing. We are also working with Gabe Midland on hosting a faculty development session on Brightspace Pulse, which is a mobile app within D2L and a very useful calendar tool for students to use for text/calendar updates on important deadlines and test dates throughout the semester.

Best wishes on continuing with a great Spring Semester and as always, stop by the Online Education offices in the TCB to say hi or just to grab a little candy!

Sarah Rasmussen

NEWS FROM OUR OFFICE

Proctoring Exams for Online Courses

For the fall of 2016, **1157** proctor forms were submitted for the **54** online courses using proctoring for exams. UC-Sioux Falls was the most popular proctoring site with DSU coming in second. The Wegner Health Science Information Center in Sioux Falls was approved last fall for proctoring and students have found the center very accommodating for proctor hours. If you have any proctoring questions, contact proctor@dsu.edu.

Online Academic Advising

Kati Larsen, DSU Online Academic Advisor for the College of Computing, has provided academic advising to over 200 online students over the span of the past year. This was the first year the advising position was created and it has proven to be a very valued resource for students!

NC-SARA Annual Enrollment Reporting in May 2017

All SARA-participating institutions are to report annually the number of students they enroll via distance education delivered outside the student's home state.

This required data submission is based on the DSU fall 2016 enrollment data reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). For SARA, that data is to be disaggregated by the state, territory, or district in which the students reside. Basically at all times, DSU is responsible for knowing where our students are located while taking online courses. Failure to provide information will bring consequences which DSU does not want to face.

Next year's reporting for 2018 will include reporting enrollment in Experiential Learning which involves campus and online students' location while student-teaching, doing clinical, and internships.

Online Course Design and Development in D2L

The site "Online Course Design and Development" has been revamped to provide guides on online course design and development in the D2L environment, and what we can do to facilitate teaching and learning in D2L. Many of the topics are in line with the recommendations from the Quality Assurance Program. The topics are grouped in the following areas:

- Design and Planning
- Course Organization and Content Development
- Learning Activities Aligned with Learning Objectives and Assessment Measures
- Class Communications
- Blended/Hybrid Learning

Contact Mingming.Shao@dsu.edu if you are interested and would like to have access to the site.

Brightspace Pulse: Pulse is a mobile app that helps students keep track of important updates. The app

connects to the user's courses in D2L and uses a calendar to display course work availability as registered in the course calendars, including Dropbox assignments, quizzes, discussion topics, content topics, and other calendar events. It can help both students and instructors to keep tracks of course schedules.

- Pulse - Overview – Learner (YouTube Video)
- Pulse - Set Date Availability for Content – Instructor (YouTube Video)

Collaborate Ultra: Collaborate Ultra (newer HTML5 version without Java requirement) is a web

conferencing tool that supports audio and video conferencing, plus text chat and application sharing. Collaborate Ultra is now integrated into D2L and is available under the Communications menu on the course navbar. Every instructor can set up Collaborate rooms. For assistance, contact DSU-D2L@sdbor.edu.

Having Empathy for Online Learners

By Kevin Smith, *Instructor, College of Education*

In the Fall of 2014, I started working on my doctoral degree in Instructional Design and Technology at the University of Memphis. My program is offered entirely online. Prior to starting this program, I had taught online courses as a faculty member at DSU and created online courses as an Instructional Designer for three different organizations. Based on these experiences, I can say that I was fairly confident in my abilities to create and deliver quality online courses. As I near the end of my doctoral program and reflect on my experiences as an online learner in this program, I can say that there was room for improvement in how I created and delivered online instruction. Based on my experiences, below are three things to consider as you create and deliver online courses:

1. Feedback Matters: As an online student it's easy to feel like you're on an island without anyone to connect with and collaborate with. You may not have an opportunity for the informal conversations that happen before or after class in a face-to-face course with fellow classmates and/or the instructor. When you submit an assignment, you wait and wonder. Did the instructor get it? Was it what he/she was looking for? When will I get feedback? Am I on the right track in this course? Feedback matters to all students, but I think it is especially important to provide timely, substantive feedback to online students.

2. Provide Good Instructions: I've had courses that felt like a scavenger hunt at times. For example, the articles to read are in the syllabus, the assignments to complete are in the Content section, any changes to due dates will be posted in the News section. As an online student, I would spend a fair amount of time trying to find things and make sure I was doing what the instructor intended. Some might argue that I was developing problem-solving skills. However, I would argue that I was spending a lot of time and energy on things not related to the content of the course. I think it's okay to utilize different areas of your learning management system, but make sure you're clear and consistent with your instructions.

3. Use Video: The ability to create and post videos using a number of different tools has become increasingly easy. It's fairly common for instructors to include videos in their online courses, but I encourage you to think about having students create videos as well. Instead of having them introduce themselves using text in a discussion board, have them create a one-minute introduction video. When they participate in an online discussion, have them do it as a video instead of text. As an online student, these video interactions helped me feel connected with my classmates and accountable to my instructor. Two technology tools that I'm experimenting with this semester are VoiceThread and FlipGrid. Both of these tools allow you to easily have students create and share videos with each other.

The last several years has helped me develop empathy for online learners. I don't think these three things are groundbreaking advances in online learning, but I do think they are important to consider as you create and deliver online courses.

Movie Assignments for Student-Centered Learning

By Viki Johnson, *Associate Professor, College of Arts and Sciences*

My online classes have an asynchronous design so that students can do the work for the class on a schedule which best fits them. I realize that this method has drawbacks, most notably for a Sociology class, lack of interaction with other students. I have always used discussion boards in order help remedy this a bit, but then one semester, I discovered another way for students to build relationships with their classmates. I decided to have students in my Society and Technology class watch a movie for the final exam, and explain how the various concepts and ideas that we had been learning about all semester related to the events and characters in the movie. I was amazed at how well received the idea was by the students, and by how much depth they went into in explaining the concepts and ideas, so I decided to incorporate two to three movies into the regular curriculum for the class. I explained in the syllabus that in addition to the class text, students needed to access and watch the movies as part of the materials for the class. Once again, the enthusiasm and level of detail in the movie assignments was much greater than in a "regular" assignment, but an unintended consequence also occurred. A group of about 6 to 8 students in the class who were on campus told me that they got together and watched the movies as a group and then discussed them. Their postings on the discussion board and other written assignments reflected the ideas that they got from others, in addition to their own individual perspectives and ideas.

In short, it was a much richer and more interactive experience for these students. Likewise, a few other students in the class described watching the movies with their roommate(s) and then having a discussion afterward. A couple of nontraditional students also explained how they made the movie watching assignments family events since the movies were sci-fi or technology-related, and had appeal to individuals outside of the class. Afterward they, too, discussed the movies with their family, again giving them a richer and broader perspective. It has been a wonderful way for students in the class to engage with others in and outside of the class, and decrease the feeling of isolation that can sometimes occur in an asynchronous online class.

Make Class Videos Work Effectively for Both Online and On-Campus Students

By Josh Stroschein, *Assistant Professor, College of Computing*

I've used videos almost every semester. One of the challenges I had was determining whether to provide separate recordings or simply record my on-campus classes and post for the online students. I decided to record my on-campus sections at first. While this slightly reduced workload, it changed how I approached my on-campus sections. I use my laptop to record so I have to stay close to the microphone. This prevented me from using the microphone in the classroom and limited the amount of interaction I could get from my students. This made the classroom experience far too one-sided, so I ensured that I repeated the questions/comments asked in class to ensure that any periods of inaudible dialogue was clear in the video recording. Feedback has varied over the years but I do receive a lot of positive comments about using the on-campus classes, online students feel like they're a part of a class since there is typically far more conversation than recording done in my office.

For online only sections there is no classroom lecture to record. I take a slightly different approach to creating videos in which I make them much more focused and topic driven. In classroom, I may talk for 45 minutes to an hour (to include discussion). In online-only videos, I try to keep to 20 minutes. Since they are topic focused, they become much easier to plug and play, I can re-arrange the course layout without causing any noticeable irregularities and without having to re-record the lecture. I can also use these videos in other classes where the content overlaps or students simply need a refresher.

Finally, there is on-campus only section. The first time I taught a class without a corresponding online section I decided not to record the lecture; I thought it would save some time and that the students would not need it. Student opinion surveys proved otherwise! My students have become so dependent on the class videos that I have found they essentially use them as their notes - they don't take notes in class but rather go back and review the video as needed.

Tips on D2L Tools

By Mark Geary, *Associate Professor, College of Education*

Tip 1: Creating a "Current Grade" grade item in D2L, to automatically calculate what each student's current score is based on what has been graded, and gives students instant access to their current cumulative grade.

Tip 2: Use the "List" feature of the calendar. Once all assignments are in, print out a sheet in PDF with all class activities and their due dates on it. Online students like to have this especially early in the semester.

Course Gamification in D2L

By Renae Spohn, *Assistant Professor, HIM*

I was inspired to try to design a gamified course after participating in a Brightspace sponsored webinar where a Mankato State University faculty member demonstrated how to utilize D2L for the creation of a gamified course. I teamed up with Ming-Ming Shao, Instructional Design Specialist in the Office of Online Education to design an online undergraduate gamified course using resources already available in D2L. In planning the design I also asked for some feedback on the design from faculty in my discipline.

I learned from the webinar that it is important to communicate to students in the syllabus that the design of the course is a game format and they have the option to play the game or to opt out of playing the game (completing the course in the usual fashion). Definitions of terms developed for the game must be communicated to students. For example, week one may be called level 1. The theme and name of the game, the purpose of the game and the instructions for the game must be defined and clear to students. The game must help students to reach the objectives of the course utilizing proper assessment methodology.

After the course design was completed, I began to set up the course in D2L. I created a graphic with the game name (to utilize on the course home page). In preparing for a leaderboard I created characters that the students select to maintain their anonymity on the home page leaderboard widget. I created awards of two types— awards that look like certificates and others that look like Easter Eggs (since Easter falls in the spring semester). I set up short quizzes as bonus quizzes that students can tempt. Extra reading content is identified to help them in preparing for the bonus quizzes. Easter Egg bonuses are available for completing StudyMate activities and posting a screenshot in the Dropbox. StudyMate activities include terms and definitions from the course content. I opted not to set up triggering events that would allow students to progress through the game at their own pace. Instead, I continued with the normal course week by week pace so student discussions could be value-added.
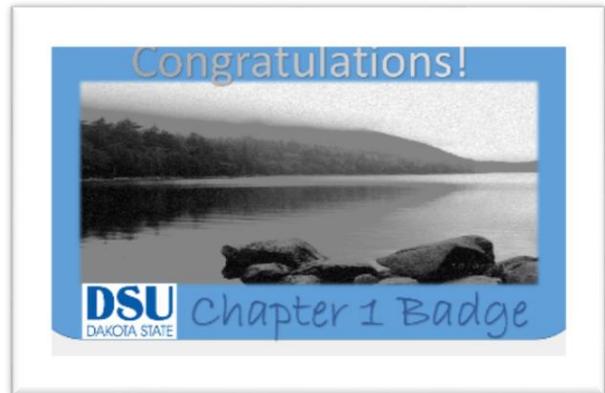
After the course setup was completed in D2L, I recorded instructions to students to let me know which character they would want to be as their way of communicating to me that they wanted to play the game. On week one, one student selected a character, week two followed with one more student selecting a character and week three yet one more student selected a character. On week two I communicated to the students that not enough had selected to play this semester but that they could continue to take attempt the bonus quizzes and Easter egg bonuses.

In summary, even though the students didn't choose characters for the leaderboard, they are completing most of the extra quizzes that have been created. I am rewarding them with the awards and Easter Eggs as intended with the game design and most students will likely earn the available 25 bonus points.

5 Easy & Practical D2L Customizations
By Stacey Berry, *Associate Professor, College of Arts and Sciences*

1	Use custom Widgets and Navbar links on the Home page to encourage students to stay *in the shell*. Edit course / Navigation / Custom Links Edit course / Widgets	
2	Install [Accessible HTML Templates](#) from iLearn Resource Center of Tennessee Tech.	
3	Use the template and the Content area and items to keep formatting and expectations consistent throughout the shell. One item for each class meeting, graded assignment, or other milestone moment.	
4	Use the templates and Content area items to keep due dates, homework, and other specifications clearly identified. Headings, notes, news, due dates.	
5	Don't forget to use the built in D2L functions to provide automatic Content Item LINKS TO: Discuss, Drop box, Quizzes, Schedule. Keep the structure simple and consistent!	
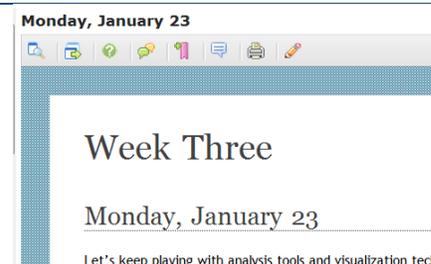
Practice with the Pros - Online Skype Sessions

30 minute "practice with the pro" sessions to do a mock interview and receive feedback and interview skill pointers.

When: March 7th – 9:00am-3:00pm
Where: Online - Skype sessions
Contact: Janelle Nielsen at
Janelle.Nielsen@dsu.edu
Phone: 605-256-5122

Online Resume Writing – Online Skype Sessions

When: March 16th – 11:30am-1:00pm
Where: Online - Skype sessions
Contact: Kelly Greene at
Kelly Greene@dsu.edu

For questions relating to the newsletter, contact Sarah Rasmussen at Sarah.Rasmussen@dsu.edu
Office Phone: 605-256-5048