

## **From Conscript to Volunteer: Moving Faculty Online Beyond COVID-19**

By most accounts, faculty – aided by instructional designers and other support staff – have done an admirable job of adjusting pedagogy and assessments to meet the requirements of what to many is an entirely new way of teaching.

This grand international experiment in remote instruction may very well yield new technology-enhanced opportunities to serve more students in sustainable ways. Yet forward-thinking institutions will be actively searching for new opportunities even in the midst of the pandemic. So once the pandemic is over, how can institutions advocate to potentially resistant faculty to continue—or possibly even expand—their online teaching?

The following list is far from comprehensive, but may prove useful.

### **Promote understanding of the difference between remote and online delivery**

Faculty may not be aware that higher education has a 30-year history of primarily asynchronous distance education. Longtime researchers and practitioners know what makes a course successful, including intentionally-structured, well-designed activities and assessments. The emergency pivot to primarily synchronous delivery, without the benefit of instructional design and preparation time, gave students a very different—and, arguably, lesser—experience. Faculty should understand the difference.

### **Align everyone's needs**

Like any initiative, an online learning programme will thrive when it is structured to simultaneously support the needs of an institution's key stakeholders: faculty, students and the organisational mission. Structuring a highly selective, prestige-oriented programme will be different from structuring an open-access, growth-oriented programme. However, whatever they are, the goals' alignment to the institutional mission must also address the particular needs of faculty and students. For faculty, this may include workload relief or incentives. For students, it may include new programmes, additional support or campus-based fee waivers. Each arrangement will be specific to the unique institutional context.

### **Leverage data**

A reluctance to teach online is typically not the result of a faculty member's personal experience in a distant modality other than, perhaps, the recent emergency remote synchronous delivery. More often it is based on myth, anecdote and perception. But scholars, researchers and scientists rightly respond to data and online learning has a rich corpus that demonstrates its efficacy. These include an entire sub-category showing no significant difference in outcomes between online and traditional face-to-face instruction. There is also growing research indicating that blended learning yields better results than either one.

### **Promote SoTL**

Some faculty may be attracted to the prospect of teaching online by the ability to conduct pedagogical research. Technology-enhanced instruction offers rich opportunities for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). By its very nature, the learning management system collects an enormous amount of data that can be mined and analysed.

### **Respect teaching expertise**

When encouraging faculty to teach online, it's important to respect and value their existing teaching expertise and knowledge of their discipline. While they may not yet know how to most effectively deliver content online, it is very likely that they are classroom veterans. The key is helping them understand how to convey their existing expertise in a new delivery modality.

**Also offer support**

No matter how much classroom experience an instructor may have, they will still need assistance in developing their first online course. Central support units, with instructional designers, media developers and helpdesk staff, can eliminate the start-up friction that may be preventing some faculty from attempting to teach online. Yet new initiatives will only be realised by and through faculty.

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