

May 2009, Pre-Conference Questions

Session 1: Best Practices in Teaching

Onsite:

1. How are adult students different than traditional students and how should faculty adjust for these differences?

- Adults/Traditional Students
 - Adults know why they are in class
 - Age
 - Break from traditional education (k-12)
 - They are paying for it
 - “arrested development”
 - Teaching-writing, math, etc.
 - Life skills
 - Lack of confidence
 - Experience balancing priorities
 - External pressures – family, church, job, etc.
 - Motivation
 - Desire “real world” education
- Faculty Adjustments
 - Orientation class
 - Experience into the classroom
 - Class rosters – title, employer
 - Instructors – respect the experience
 - No lectures/facilitate discussions

2. What teaching strategies help adult students to apply their learning?

- Presentations – field questions, discussions, etc.
- Discussions that apply concepts – “What is the most significant part of the reading (to you)?”
- Finding relevancy in the subject matter – apply to the students reality
- Finding cultural connection with subject matter
- Team work that can help with experience on the job
- Case studies – completed in the community (ex. Business owners sitting with accounting students)
- Class time is used less for delivery of content
- Class time is used for facilitation – textbook is used for delivery of content; 3 pages written on reading; book tests
- Efficiency of class time
- Co-learner mentality – professors and students
- Pay attention to the times when lecture is given
- Classroom management – working lunch; break times; keeping class rolling
- Faculty meetings to discuss cohorts

3. How do we know they have learned? What are some strategies to assess adults learning in our courses?

- When students are able to teach the material or concepts to others
- Can students make their learning relevant? Testing is imperfect – reliance upon writing as evidence.
- Evidence of calling
 - Connection of theory to relevancy
 - Strategy – standardization to one writing format (APA) to reduce confusion

- Practical application in the workplace
- “If they don’t know it, there’s nothing there for students to apply.” Provide opportunities for students to connect theory with life experience and actual practice.
- Understand the theory by connecting it to student lives. (e.g. faith integration & life practice)
- Assessment
 - Comparison of previous work to current work
 - Summary/response papers to check for integration into frameworks
 - Use quizzes to teach, rather than punish...identify key teaching points to discuss during class; avoid quiz/test for punitive goals
 - Long term follow-up
 - Use of rubrics
 - Demonstration of learning through life application – “The proof is in the pudding.”
 - Portfolio artifacts demonstrating mastery
 - Some programs have external accountability – Teacher Ed; Nursing: Ministry
- Writing Assessment
 - Application of learning – show it through writing/projects
 - Synthesize information
 - Discussion – concept & content based

4. What are some strategies to grade student work to maximize learning?

- Rubrics
- Perform
- Pre/Post testing
- Formative assessment – immediate feedback
- Uniformed template
- Reflect on teaching practices
- Clear course objectives
- Real-life application
- Self-evaluation, reflections
- Know your students

5. What are the characteristics of an effective teacher?

- Competency in field
- Understanding learning styles – strategically teaching to various learning styles
- Empathy for adult learner – flexibility in balance
- Process as important as content
- Commitment to learners – timely communication and feedback
- Personal experiences – credibility
- Student centered to reach objectives/outcomes
- Energized by teaching
- Recognition of a “call” to teaching
- Transparency/Vulnerability – willingness to not “be the expert”
- Facilitator
- Personal modeling of Christian faith integration
- Willingness to “grow” as a professor

Online:

1. What are some strategies to design effective online discussions?

- Clear deadlines of participation – substantive, move forward (ex. 2 posts 3 times per week)
- Weekly checkpoints – Accountability
- Teachers participate 5 out of 7 days – if missed, notified by college
- Set number of responses to post for faculty
- Training for faculty certification

2. How do we know they have learned? What are strategies to assess online learning?

- Reflective writing
- Projects – Rubrics
- Pre/Post tests
- Objective tests (Just like on-ground)
- Discussions
- Application of knowledge/skills with reporting on experience
- External exams (praxis, NCLEX)
- Capstone course (cap-sim)
- Portfolios
- Practicums/Internships

3. What are some strategies to effectively grade online work to maximize learning?

- Rubrics
- Comments from Professor – Feedback
- Technology-based support systems
- Using Word© to insert comments, etc.
- Using “Turnitin” to make students accountable for their own work
- Using discussion threads
- Consistent faculty involvement in online discussions
- System-based testing design & support – may have option to retake
- Positive feedback is essential (along with corrective)
- Using student photos in discussions to increase “connectivity” with students

4. What are some strategies to maximize student engagement in online learning?

- Discussion board
- Introductions – icebreaker questions, picture (optional)
- All info posted
- Students to be collaborative with solutions
- Reflective off of clips (movie, personal: less than 10%)
- 360 degree evaluation
- Immediate feedback – set time to be online; set time to look at assignments
- Be deliberate in forming a learning “community”
 - Embedding student pictures in on-line “conversations”
 - Students introduce themselves at class start
 - Students assigned to do a devotional
 - Threaded discussions required (generated by professor)
 - Optional “chat” room

- Required responses to threaded discussion posts – grading rubrics have both “quality” & “quantity” requirements post on three different days
- Small group projects/presentations
- Immediate feedback ALWAYS
- Adequate compensation for faculty

5. What are some strategies to build an online community which is conducive to learning?

- Need understanding of “Community”
- Interaction with instructor
- Safety, feeling free to share
- Acceptance – Know the person behind the computer – Know individual “strengths”
- Relationship building – require autobiography in all courses
- Encouraging
- Online chaplain
- Support
- Discussion
- One on one communication – Online advising center
- Threaded discussions – consider use of skype or like software
- Meaningful feedback
- Response time
- Chat – Faculty (online & faculty to faculty professional development)

6. What are characteristics of an effective online faculty member?

- Organized – logistically, planned ahead
- Good grasp of technology
- Timely in responses – within 24 hours
- Good support – tech and administratively
- Build in “How to” instructions
- Well trained – familiar with services
- Makes effort to be personal/relational – beyond factual only
- Sets the tone

7. How are online learners different than onsite learners and how can we use those differences to maximize learning?

- More independent – disciplined – motivated – self directed – assertive – adaptable – initiative – can be high maintenance and require extra attention – demanding
- Maximize learning
 - Assign independent projects – get the students to work together
 - Create team work by assigning “work together” projects
 - They have to take ownership
 - They cannot hide – they have to be engaged – must go online
 - Moodle – Angel – Blackboard – E-College
 - Be comfortable in “online” environment
 - Online learners juggle more life issues that keep them from attending live classes
 - Consider how class is structured to accommodate online learner needs
 - Online learners tend to be more diverse – cultures/time zone but adds richness to the class & challenges
 - Maximize by assuring certain level of computer proficiency

Session 2: Best Practices in Integrating Faith and Learning

Online and Onsite (same questions)

1. What are strategies to effectively integrate faith and learning without alienating the non-churched?

- Living faith “in front of” students
- Loving students
- Having unbelievers in classes produce “cognitive dissonance”
- Faculty/Students give personal testimonies of salvation
- Out-of-class discussions
- Living it out – cohort as a “community that cares”
- Integrity
- Maintain loving, open relationships with students
- Commitment to the open dialogue
- Avoiding “Sunday School” terms
- Modeling the Fruits of the Spirit

2. How should we approach faith integration with students from diverse backgrounds?

- Faith (Christianity) transcends culture.
- Apply “theory” to real world – Demonstrate the reality of faith
- Connect scripture to instruction and integrate throughout the curriculum
- Biblical love – esteem, respect, honor regardless of background, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- Understanding of worldview (yours & others)
- Critical thinking
- Respect
- Diverse faculty
- Core values

3. Why is faith integration important?

- Faith is core to who we are
- Our distinction
- Develops trustworthy workers
- Helps to find God’s calling
- Helps to apply faith to real world
- Brings “completeness”, body, mind, soul
- To appreciate the spiritual journeys of others

4. What are strategies to write a devotional?

- Telling personal story with application
- Handout, movie clips, video clips, etc.
- Post as announcement in LMS with link to discussion
- Tie devotional to class content
- Reflect on current event

5. What are different approaches to faith integration?

- Good
 - Modeling
 - “Collision Points” b/w scripture and secular viewpoints and/or events
 - Recognize ministry opportunities – teachable moments
 - Using the Bible as a standard
 - Prayer
- Bad
 - Hit them over the head with the Bible
 - “Because I said so”
 - Out-of-context
 - Personal “sermonizing”
 - Religious mandate
- Cornerstone & Capstone class
- Spirituality inventory/assessment
- Formalized post to inform faith integration
- Required religion/bible courses
- Placement of courses at the beginning to give context
- Service projects (social gospel)
- Cross-cultural component

6. How do we skillfully integrate faith and learning in the context of the course without it seeming to be an “add on”?

- Compare statistical probability of evolution & creation using computer programming language
- Information: correcting misinformation - scientific, historical, religious, cultural
- Approach the basic questions: Who am I? Why am I here?
- Living your faith
- Loving them as Christ would
- Develop personal relationships with students (appropriate)
- Professors must identify the number of scriptures directly related to the content/discipline that they will use in the courses they teach
- At least one assignment in which students design faith integration into the content
- Choose “non-buzz word” language to focus on faith integration i.e. using current events/pop culture topics to expose/examine biblical principles...
- Discussion centered around “how do we live our faith in these situations?”
- Modeling – Faculty living out their faith in front of students.

7. What classroom/online activities particularly lend themselves to integration of faith and learning?

- Guided discussion
- Current event connection w/ faith & learning – reflective papers
- Incorporation into the outside assignment
- “Plant, water or harvest, but don’t try to do them all.”
- Purposeful resources and materials in content area. (Making the case for Christ)
- Prayer for students
- Devotions
- Reflection paper
- Worldview essay
- Faith-based read – pre/post

Other insights with no question attached:

- “Netiquette”
 - Willing to work in the on-line environment
 - Willing to be a learner
 - Adaptable
 - Overly “student friendly”
 - Have to have time to build “community” within “classroom” – being “warm” in communication
 - Needs to be “open” – personal
 - Willing to give immediate feedback
 - Ability to be “creative” in designing on-line learning experiences
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- Instruction skills - i.e. listening skills
 - Respect/environment of security, safety
 - Religious perspective/culture
 - Course in pluralism/non-Christian religions