From the Editor

Because it contains news of ongoing projects, this special summer edition of L and L online will be updated and issued again during Welcome Back week this fall.

One of the focuses of this special edition is the comparison of online courses to face-to-face courses. In 2010, the Department of Education published an evaluation of over 1000 studies that compared courses in these modes of delivery, and the first key finding was that “Students who took all or part of their course online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.” See page 2 for the abstract of that evaluation study.

In a recent E-MAT meeting, members noted that no formal comparisons had yet been made at Ferris of student achievement in online and face-to-face classes. Therefore, the OTLC has decided to compare student achievement in English 321 (Advanced Composition) and in English 325 (Advanced Business Writing). These are, respectively, the highest and the fifth-highest-enrolled online courses at Ferris. Furthermore, a number of instructors in the Department of Languages and Literature teach these courses in both modes. See pages 3-6 of this newsletter for information about the first stage of this study, which should be completed this summer.

As we know, not all faculty at Ferris compare online courses favorably with face-to-face courses. See pages 7 and 8 for Spence Tower’s elegant application of his expertise, specifically in workplace motivation, to identify and then counter the reasons faculty don’t want to teach online, one of which is “I don’t think they [students] learn as much online as they do in a f2f class.”

In the last edition of this newsletter, the OTLC honored twelve of our colleagues for their significant contributions to online learning at Ferris, but we hadn’t included everyone whose name had been given to us. This time, on pages 9-12, we honor Sandy Burns, Mischelle Stone, Katherine Harris, and Ali Konieczny for their fine work in online at Ferris. (Cont.)

Next, on pages 13-15, we reminisce about the past with photos of the February Online Courses Fair, and then on pages 16-17, we take a look at the future in OTLC member Linda Sherwood’s two articles, one about MOOC’s and the other about Linda’s attendance at MiBUG, where she found out what Blackboard has in store for us soon.

Finally, on pages 18-20, is “The Four Hallmarks of FerrisConnetiquette™,” hot off the presses of an E-MAT sub-committee charged with writing online etiquette guidelines for Ferris courses. Jackie Hughes, Teresa Cook, Amy Buse, and I worked on these for the last two months, and E-MAT will show them to the Academic Senate this fall—as a courtesy since they’re not policies, just guidelines. Use them in your summer courses if you like.

~Elaine

In This Edition....

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Abstract

Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies
Published by the Department of Education in 2010

A systematic search of the research literature from 1996 through July 2008 identified more than a thousand empirical studies of online learning. Analysts screened these studies to find those that a) contrasted an online to a face-to-face condition, b) measured student learning outcomes, c) used a rigorous research design, and d) provided adequate information to calculate an effect size.

Earlier studies of distance learning concluded that these technologies were not significantly different from regular classroom learning in terms of effectiveness. Policymakers reasoned that if online instruction is no worse than traditional instruction in terms of student outcomes, then online education initiatives could be justified on the basis of cost efficiency or need to provide access to learners in settings where face-to-face instruction is not feasible.

Moreover, with the advances in Web-based and collaborative technologies which are a far cry from earlier distance education applications, Policy makers and practitioners want to know about the effectiveness of Internet-based, interactive online learning approaches and need information about the conditions under which online learning is effective.

Key findings:

• Students who took all or part of their course online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.

• Effect sizes were larger for studies in which the online instruction was collaborative or instructor-directed than in those studies where online learners worked independently.

• Most of the variations in the way in which different studies implemented online learning did not affect student learning outcomes significantly.

• The effectiveness of online learning approaches appears quite broad across different content and learner types.

A further review of experimental and quasi-experimental studies that contrasted different types of online learning practices found the following:

• When a study contrasts blended and purely online conditions, student learning is usually comparable across the two.

• Elements such as video or online quizzes do not appear to influence the amount that students learn in online classes.

• Online learning can be enhanced by giving learners control of their interactions with media and prompting learner reflection.

• When groups of students are learning together online, support mechanisms such as guiding questions generally influence the way students interact, but not the amount they learn.

Comparing Student Achievement in Online and Face-to-Face Sections of English 321 (Advanced Composition) and of English 325 (Advanced Business Writing), from Summer, 2009, through Spring, 2013

This study is a faculty initiative of the Online Teaching and Learning Committee (OTLC) Department of Languages and Literature Ferris State University Big Rapids, Michigan May, 2013

Author of the study: Dr. Elaine McCullough Professor, Department of Languages and Literature

The purpose of this four-year study is to compare levels of student achievement in online and face-to-face sections of English 321 and of English 325. The Department of Languages and Literature will then use these data to determine which, if any, measures should be taken to change our approach to either mode of instruction in either course. Associate Provost Roberta Teahen and the E-learning Management Advisory Team have also expressed an interest in gathering comparison data university-wide on student achievement in Ferris’ online and face-to-face courses.

English 321, Advanced Composition, is the highest enrolled online course, and English 325, Advanced Business Writing, is the fifth-highest enrolled online course at Ferris State University; further, the department offers numerous face-to-face sections of both these courses, and a number of faculty teach one or both course in both modes of instructions. Therefore, a comparison of student achievement in online and face-to-face sections of these courses will provide a large amount of useful data.

In Phase 1 of this study, students’ final grades as well as W grades will be collected, averaged, and compared. The results of Phase 1 will be exclusively statistical.

An additional phase of the study will be both statistical and analytical and will involve instructors of English 321 and English 325.

Phase 1

Definitions:

“Course delivery mode” is the way a course delivered, and in this study that mode may be either face-to-face or online.

A “face-to-face” course is one taught traditionally, in a Ferris classroom. The course may have a FerrisConnect component or may be a “blended” course.

- For purposes of identification, any ENGL 321 or ENGL 325 with a fully numerical section designation will be labeled face-to-face.

An “online” course is one taught fully online, with no physical class meetings.

- For purposes of identification, any ENGL 321 or ENGL 325 with a letter of the alphabet in its section designation will be labeled online.

“Student achievement” will be defined primarily by students’ final grades but will also include withdrawal rates.

“Final grades,” which are in alphabetical format, will be converted into numbers according to the 4.0 scale.
Scope

Goal: The purpose of Phase 1 of this study is to compare student achievement in face-to-face and online sections of English 321 and of English 325. The statistical data gathered in this phase will be made available to the Department of Languages and Literature as well as to the University, and the OTLC will use these data to fully articulate Phase 2 of this study.

Time Span of the Study. This study will span the four years from early May, 2009, through late May, 2013, and will include the twelve semesters indicated below:

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<td>Fall, 2009</td>
<td>Fall, 2010</td>
<td>Fall, 2011</td>
<td>Fall, 2012</td>
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<td>Spring, 2010</td>
<td>Spring, 2011</td>
<td>Spring, 2012</td>
<td>Spring, 2013</td>
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Time Periods for Data Collection. All data will be collected for five time periods:

- All four years combined
- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4

Populations to Be Studied:

All English 321 AND English 325 sections taught through to completion during the four years of the study are included in the study.

All instructors who taught at least one face-to-face AND one online section of English 321 OR of English 325 through to completion during the four years of the study are included in the study.

Instructions for English 321 and English 325 Comparisons

The results desired from the comparisons listed below are (1) the standard deviation and (2) the significance of the differences between the two averages be found.

Comparison of English 321 as Taught Face-to-Face and Online:

Part 1: Comparison by Sections
Limitations: Only as described in the scope of the study.

A.1 For all four years, average the final grades in all face-to-face sections, average the final grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.
A.2 For all four years, average the final grades without the F grades in all face-to-face sections, average the final grades without the F grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

B.1 For each of the four years, average the final grades in all face-to-face sections, average the final grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

B.2 For each of the four years, average the final grades without the F grades in all face-to-face sections, average the final grades without the F grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

C.1 For all four years, average the number of F grades in all face-to-face sections, average the number of F grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

C.2 For each of the four years, average the number of F grades in all face-to-face sections, average the number of F grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

D.1 For all four years, average the number of W grades in all face-to-face sections, average the number of W grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

D.2 For each of the four years, average the number of W grades in all face-to-face sections, average the number of W grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

**Part 2: Comparison by Instructors**

Limitations: (1) Include only instructors who taught both a face-to-face AND an online section of English 321 course during the four years under study; and (2) use no instructors’ names; instead substitute a letter of the alphabet (examples: Instructor A, Instructor B, etc.).

A.1 For all four years, for each instructor, average the final grades in all face-to-face sections, average the final grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

A.2 For all four years, for each instructor, average the final grades without the F grades in all face-to-face sections, average the final grades without the F grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

B.1 Find those instructors who taught using both modes of instruction in each individual year of the study. Then for each of these instructors, and for each of these years, average the final grades in that/those face-to-face section(s), average the final grades in that/those online section(s), and then compare the averages.

B.2 Using the same instructors, years, and courses described in B.1, calculate and compare the final grades without the F grades.

C.1 For all four years, for each instructor, average the number of F grades in all face-to-face sections, average the number of F grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.
C.2 For each of the four years, using the same instructors and courses described in B.1, calculate and compare the number of F grades.

D.1 For all four years, for each instructor, average the number of W grades in all face-to-face sections, average the number of W grades in all online sections, and then compare the averages.

D.2 For each of the four years, using the same instructors and courses described in B.1, calculate and compare the number of W grades.

Comparison of English 325 as Taught Face-to-Face and Online:

Repeat the steps described above for ENGL 321.

The OTLC hopes to have Phase 1 completed by the end of the summer. Robert von der Osten is providing invaluable advice. The Curriculum Committee is doing a comparison study of their own, and Lynn Chrenka, who is on both the Curriculum Committee and the OTLC, has expressed an interest in helping with the OTLC study. And Kathy L. Fisher, Assistant Director, Enrollment Technical Services, may help develop the report that will pull the grades and calculate the averages for comparison.

The Online Presence of the OTLC

You can find out about us at our Department address:

You can find our newsletters at our Academic Affairs address:
http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/academicaffairs/online/otc

You can find our Facebook page and our blog here:
http://www.facebook.com/onlineteachinglearning/
http://onlineteachingandlearning.wordpress.com/

(Both were created and are monitored by our Chair, Jon Taylor.)
Reasons Some May Avoid Teaching Online
~Spence Tower, Management Department

My PhD is in organizational behavior (OB). One simple way to view this topic would be as a combination of psychology and business management. A primary topic within OB is workplace motivation. Over the years, I have accumulated several questions that can fairly accurately address why some people don’t do certain things. Keep in mind, these are not my questions; these are questions generated from numerous motivation theories.

It may be helpful to apply these questions in an effort to understand why many of our peer faculty members have little excitement to teach online. After each focal question, I will briefly elaborate as well as add a few potential responses.

What type of reward is there for me to put in the effort?¹

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<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ From what I hear, there is a lot of extra work for no extra pay</td>
<td>Yes, compared to teaching a f2f class (especially one you have taught multiple times), there will be added creation and preparation time. The good news is, do it once and it is easy to roll over for future semesters.</td>
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<td>▪ My “reward” is interacting with students and seeing them learning. Online, I won’t be interacting nor will I “see” them learn.</td>
<td>You can still get a sense of their understanding through reading their materials. Well-designed assignments and online discussions can definitely elicit student growth and understanding. With increasingly user-friendly products like Skype and Google Hangout, you can actually ‘see’ their growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ I don’t think they learn as much online as they do in a f2f class.</td>
<td>Research has shown support for online learning. It boils down to the classic answer of “It depends!” Both f2f and online can be effective, depending on how well the instructor has designed and implemented the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ This online stuff is just a fad. Pretty soon, all will realize true education occurs in a real classroom, with real walls, real students, and real interaction—which involves real eye contact.</td>
<td>Though a bit dramatic, your issue is well stated. The demographic and statistical trends, however, are indicating continued online growth. Though, at some point, there will likely be some semblance of equilibrium between online and f2f offerings, I think we will still be in a significant growth period for the next decade at least. Plus, that future “equilibrium point” will be at a technological level far above where many of us are now comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ferris is all about being a teaching institution. I strongly support this and I think teaching is best accomplished through the traditional classroom.</td>
<td>Yes, Ferris is a teaching institution and, truthfully, that is why I love it here. HOWEVER, another key component of our mission is to provide opportunity. Online options clearly offer a college education to many who are unable to uproot themselves (and their families) and move. This education can boost their self-esteem, their family’s economic future, as well as their community’s resources. So, in a very real sense, teaching online makes a significant contribution to an important Ferris Core Value of opportunity.</td>
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How confident am I that I could teach online?²

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<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ I’m used to teaching f2f. Teaching online seem like it demands a very different set of skills.</td>
<td>Learning the Blackboard system for the first time—or adjusting to the latest version—can be a daunting task. Fortunately, you are not alone: between FCTL’s helpful personnel, your fellow knowledgeable faculty, as well as short videos from Atomic Learning and Blackboard’s own help section, most questions can be addressed fairly quickly. You just have to take advantage of what is offered.</td>
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What if I’m not sure if I have all the resources needed? (Resources can include time, appropriate computer and internet access, design/tech assistance, etc.)

- It takes lots of time and I already feel overwhelmed.
  I hear you. However, once you get a class set up the way you want with your assignments and resources within it, you are likely to find that you are actually saving time as your roll it over to new semesters. Of course, there is the need for continuous improvement.

- I’m gaining familiarity with FerrisConnect but I could use lots of help to improve it. Unfortunately, I hate asking for help and appearing clueless.
  In FerrisConnect, as in life, are any of us really done with learning? We are all in this together and ‘Collaboration’ is another one of our core values!
  A desire for continuous improvement and the willingness to make mistakes are key components toward boosting our students’ understanding of our course content.

Where do I start? How do I put together a good online course?³

- There seems to be so much to do to get started . . . and a ton more to make sure it is good.
  Once again, you are not alone. There are many at Ferris that want to help you get on the road to creating an outstanding online course.
  You could seek out the staff and programs through FCTL as well as some of your fellow teachers.

¹ – Expectancy Theory
² – Expectancy Theory and Social Learning Theory
³ – Goal Setting Theory

About the OTLC

The 2012-13 members of the Online Teaching and Learning Committee are Jon Taylor, Chair; Steve Fox, Recorder; Lynn Chrenka; Dan Ding; Elaine McCullough; and Linda Sherwood. The OTLC is an open committee and welcomes department members who wish to participate.

The mission of the Online Teaching Committee is to promote and facilitate online teaching within the Department of Languages and Literature, act as a resource for best practices, support the use of online technology in the classroom, develop policy guidelines for offering courses online, and represent the department’s online interests to other University bodies.

We meet at 11:00 am on the third Thursday of the month, publish a newsletter twice a semester, and host department workshops and campus-wide activities related to online instruction.
When I first met Sandy, we were serving on the Online Class-Size Committee, trying to hammer out a satisfactory formula that would work for all classes in all programs. We did devise a formula that I, and probably almost everyone else, have forgotten, but I do remember Sandy. She was, and still is, a passionate supporter of the fully online BS in Dental Hygiene.

With the help of an instructional designer, she and others in Dental Hygiene and Medical Imaging mapped out all the courses and objectives beforehand very carefully, and then went fully online with the Dental Hygiene Bachelor Completion Program in the fall of 2008. Since then, the program has been a tremendous success, outperforming competing programs at the University of Detroit, Mercy, and the University of Michigan.

Sandy got interested in online when she took a sabbatical in 1996-97 to get a degree in nursing and found so much of the work was on a computer. When she returned to her Dental Hygiene students, she found that they just didn’t have the computer skills she now realized they needed. So that first year she began teaching them typing, word processing, engine searching and so on; the next year she motivated them to learn Excel because that’s the way they had to keep track of their grades. And so it went until they were able to pull together case-based presentations involving various computer-related media.

Here is just a sample of Sandy’s extensive online contributions to Ferris:

- 2006-2012 FerrisConnect Advisory Board
- 2010-2011 Online Class-Size Committee
- 2008-2010 Fully Online BS degree in Dental Hygiene – First Student-Designed and Created Fully Online BS; Curriculum Approved by FSU Senate/CFTL
- 2007-2009 University Advancing Online Task Force
- 2006-2008 FerrisConnect Vista-Certified Trainer FCTL
- 2006 WebCT Vista 4 Specialist – Program and Exam Completed
- 2005-2006 Mastery of Key Competencies in Design and Teaching in Vista 4
- 2005 Online Learning Committee
- 2005 Best Practices in Student Services Online Conference
- 2005 Higher Learning Commission – Chicago
- 2005 Designer/Developer Mixed Delivery Course
- 2005 Lilly North Conference – Michigan
- 2004 Presentation: Computers in Education
- 2004 Innovations in Higher Ed – U. South Carolina
- 2004 Computers on Campus National Conference – Orlando
- 2004 Presentation: Computers in Education
- 2004 WebCT Best Practices – FSU FCTL
- 2003 WebCT – Impact User Conference – California
- 2002 Distance Learning – Online Committee Member/UCEL
- 1998-2000 Return from Sabbatical – Integrate Computer Skills into Every Level of Dental Hygiene Course Work

As Sandy looks forward to the next online challenge, she thinks of her online BS program and her students first: “Now we have to get people to know who we are,” she says. “We do get good feedback from our graduates.” Sandy notes that Dental Hygiene and Medical Imaging doesn’t advertise, except by word-of-mouth...but then, that’s the best kind of advertising there is.

~ Editor
Mischelle Stone

When Mischelle showed me her criminal justice course during last year’s Online Courses Fair, it was as if I had entered a whole new world. Well, I had...virtually. Students didn’t so much enter that course as enter a town—with people, storefronts, houses, hydrants, sidewalks, light poles—a community where all aspects of the criminal justice system could be found.

Creating a town online was no exceptional feat for Mischelle. In fact, when she was at Michigan State, she was part of a grant project for creating a virtual university. That project was where her interest in online began, although initially she didn’t want to be part of it all: “I was a reluctant convert,” she says.

That was fifteen years ago, and as Mischelle says, when the project was complete, “The students hated it.” It was too new, too advanced. Although students are familiar with virtual worlds now and with a lot of the other things we do online, she does find that they want everything in all their online courses to look the same and be in the same place for every course.

Michelle and I were discussing various ways Ferris students and faculty might compromise on the similarity of all course designs when she told me that she had been the Director of Instructional Technology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I then learned how that university made a commitment to online and created a fee structure that essentially paid for its online courses and provided incentives to the departments and the faculty. So when Mischelle came to Ferris in 2009, we not only got a CJ professor but also someone with the skills of an instructional designer and an administrator. Good for us!

Here are just a few of Mischelle’s many accomplishments related to online:


**Publications:**

**Presentations:**

**Teacher Training and Development:**
- Completed “Quality Matters at FSU: Integrating the Quality Matters Standards into Your Course” program. February 8, 2012-April 11, 2012.
- Completed the “Educating the Net Generation” training. UAB, July, 2006.

During our brief discussion, I got many useful ideas from Mischelle that E-MAT, OTLC, the Department of Languages and Literature, and others will be hearing about soon. Thanks, Mischelle!

~Editor
Katherine Harris

Katherine and I served on the first-ever Online Teaching Committee in the Department of Languages and Literature, but not until we spoke on the phone a while back did I learn that she and I became interested in online education because we had been teaching computer-assisted writing courses. Back in 1991 at the University of Nebraska, she began using computers for online support in the University’s first writing center. Then as a graduate student at Florida State University she introduced her students to the Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment. Later, at Thomas University in Georgia, she used computers in developmental writing courses, and when she came to Ferris in 1999, she had a strong foundation in how computers can bring composition and writing skills to our students. Soon she began teaching online and found that if computers and writing instruction are a perfect fit, then online education and writing instruction are even better than perfect!

For student writers, “the online digital world is so open and rich in possibilities and in ways to share,” Katherine says. Incorporating the digital world in the classroom is “an incredibly powerful approach to teaching writing.” Katherine also believes “the digital world can showcase classical rhetoric better than some texts.” For example, what better places for students to learn how writing varies with audience and purpose than for them to see those differences as they write in blogs, wikis, chat rooms or even emails? Online, she can also “stage manage” events, such as “writing along” with her students, thereby illustrating so much about the writing process that they simply can’t understand by reading about it: it’s not done perfectly the first time—and it probably shouldn’t be if the writer is to focus at first on ideas instead of on correctness. It is “meaning making”—a creative and exploratory act. Observing a PhD making errors in this process can free students to just let go and begin composing with creativity and experimentation, thereby increasing their confidence and understanding of their own skill sets.

Katherine notes that the online and the face-to-face worlds are actually merging, or perhaps some long-held views of student/instructor contact are reversing. More and more face-to-face courses now have online support, and, as Katherine does, many online instructors give their online students more attention than they give their face-to-face students. Now she is struggling with setting appropriate boundaries for her online students since they often text her on weekends.

Of course an instructor must learn a lot of technology and many strategies specific to online before he/she can hope to begin teaching an online course effectively. And the learning never stops. Just last year Ferris changed its LMS, which required a tremendous amount of retraining by everyone related to online, certainly by online instructors. Technology is always changing, and certainly professionals always want to be better professionals! Katherine’s next goal as an online instructor is to learn to use Adobe Connect, a conferencing software, so she can grade an online student’s paper while he/she watches and while they discuss what she’s doing.

Katherine is quite modest about her achievements related to online education at Ferris, but I did manage to find out that she was part of the first wave of teachers to begin teaching totally online classes at Ferris and that she has been teaching a good portion of her load online ever since. She has presented at computer and writing conferences and has given several presentations at Ferris about creating community online.

Thank you, Katherine, for being such an excellent colleague in the Department of Languages and Literature and such an ardent supporter of online education at Ferris!

~ Editor
After Librarians Stacey Anderson and Emily Mitchell both told me that Professor and Librarian Ali Konieczny was an outstanding contributor to online education at Ferris, I was intrigued to learn how she made her contributions from FLITE. Then when Ali and I spoke, I soon learned how. As Health Sciences Librarian, she wants to be sure that the students in Allied Health, which has such a strong online presence, are well supported by FLITE. For example, students in Ferris’ fully online Nursing MS, which is the number-1 such program in the U.S., are required to take a library tutorial on research, and she presents this tutorial in webinars. She tries to meet as many of these students online as possible because once they have met her, she finds they are more likely to contact her later on if they need help. She not only enjoys this wonderful opportunity to meet students, but she also enjoys the sense of community that these webinars establish in these groups of students.

Upon request, Ali also embeds library services in a course. Among these are adding content to a course directly, monitoring an online discussion board on research, offering live webinars in a course through Adobe Connect, adding research tutorials along with related quizzes that students can take and email to their instructors, and meeting individual students online and showing them how to find certain resources in the library. And she will do it all with a gracious smile! Ali encourages faculty to contact their college’s FLITE liaison if they would like any library services embedded in their courses.

When Ali was in graduate school, online education was in its early stages, but she did take several online courses, which has given her a dual point of view that some of us in online education wish we had too. Seeing courses from the students’ point of view is perhaps one reason that Ali is willing to host a webinar for an instructor even if only one or two students need her help.

Here are just a few of Ali’s contributions to online education at Ferris:

- Provision of embedded librarian services in select online classes, 2007 – present.
- Provision of library content for online courses without embedded services, 2007 – present.
- “Enhancing Asynchronous Online Classes with Audio Files and Webinars.” Presentation given at the Lilly Conference on College & University Teaching (Sept. 24, 2010). Presenters Marilyn Skrocki and Alison Konieczny.
- “Interprofessional Collaboration in Online and Blended Courses: Course Instructor and Librarian Cooperation”. Presentation given at the 2009 Ferris Spring Learning Institute and 2009 Lilly North Conference. Presenters Marilyn Skrocki and Alison Konieczny.

Thanks for all the help you give our online students, Ali!

~ Editor
Students learn about the new student orientation for online courses from Dr. Spence Tower, professor in the College of Business and member of E-MAT, which created and implemented the orientation.

Mary Jo Doerr and a student are all smiles, perhaps about the fact that her NURS 340 is part of the College of Nursing’s graduate program in nursing, which is the number 1 online graduate nursing program in the United States.
Maureen Heaphy makes a point and Cathy Archer follows along at the computer while information Kim Carlton Smith’s the many contributions to online learning at Ferris is presented on screen. The contributions of twelve Ferris faculty were displayed in a continuously playing PowerPoint presentation throughout the fair.

Spence Tower and Lisa Eschbach consider an idea while Michelle Teschendorf is being honored on the screen behind them.

Maureen and Cathy invite a friend to help them resolve their issue; Cathy using gestures to illustrate, while Jackie Hughes, Scott Randle, and two acquaintances network in the background.
So many faculty asked for information about the Online Instructor Certification program that Jackie ran out of explanatory brochures.

See you at the fair next February!

Roxanne Cullen discusses her COAS course during one of the fair's busier moments.
How MOOCs Will Change Education

~ Linda Sherwood

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is the trendy topic when educators discuss the future of online learning. The topic of a single instructor teaching thousands of students in a class that is free of charge is also one of the scariest ideas facing educational institutions already short of funds.

Will MOOCs end the university as we know it? “No,” said University of Michigan Professor Chuck Severance, who teaches several MOOCs for U of M. During a discussion at the MiBUG conference last Friday, Severance said there is no need to worry about MOOCs ending the university model.

Although MOOCs offer free classes to students, MOOCs are not free to produce or to manage. In addition to the instructor’s time in developing and overseeing the class, costs are also incurred in hosting the site on servers. Therefore, Severance predicted MOOCs wouldn’t change the future of universities very much.

Severance noted MOOCs are currently being used as a marketing tool for elite universities, but he doesn’t believe that model will continue forever. Where exactly MOOCs are heading is unclear, and Severance noted that anyone who thinks they have the answer doesn’t understand MOOCs. “The future is wide open,” he said.

The key difference between MOOCs and a traditional class, experts point out, is that MOOCs are about learning, not completion. Severance noted students enrolling in MOOCs are generally seeking to fill in gaps of their education or to explore interests without putting their GPAs in jeopardy. Using himself as an example, Severance said he never enrolled in a literature class while an engineering major in order to protect his GPA.

As for teaching thousands of students at once, Severance said, “There is a tipping point where more students make it easier. When I have 4,000 students, I don’t have to be there.” When the number of students gets high enough, students are able to teach each other and do some of the hands-on teaching a professor would do in a smaller class.

“I think it’s going to transform students before it’s all said and done,” Severance said.

Test questions also become different in a MOOC, Severance said. “I’m not trying to catch anyone.” Severance noted a MOOC quiz isn’t written to divide students into those who get it and those who don’t. “I’m trying to put them in a learning moment. You flip things around, and you end up with much more about learning.”

Sevarance said he could see MOOCs being used by some universities in the future as part of admission requirements and possibly as a prerequisite. Some universities might require students applying for admission to show proof they had completed 40 MOOCs, for instance. He noted waiving a prerequisite using a MOOC course would be “self-fixing” and “self-punishing” because students who didn’t have the skills required that should have been obtained in the MOOC would not do well in the course.

Above all, Severance noted MOOCs could be used to enhance traditional courses rather than replace them. As a MOOC instructor, “I become more of the book’s author rather than the teacher’s replacement,” Severance said.

Severance said he believes financial models for MOOCs will be available in the near future. He noted one model might be that students earn a certificate for free and a signed certificate for $50.

Anyone interested in taking or creating a MOOC can find out more at www.class-central.com, which lists a number of MOOCs available.
Online instructors attending the Michigan Blackboard Users Group Conference (MiBUG) April 19 were excited to hear about the recent changes to Blackboard as well as about some changes soon to come. Attendees of the free conference, held at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, were also treated to users sessions on a variety of online- and Blackboard-related topics.

One of the best changes from an instructor’s standpoint is that Blackboard will allow global navigation. For example, instructors will no longer have to enter each section separately and grade each discussion board separately. Instead, instructors can respond to and grade all discussion posts for all sections from a single screen. Also, for instructors requiring discussion board posts, a new feature will prevent students from reading any discussion board post until they have submitted their own initial post.

In-line assignment grading, another great improvement to Blackboard, will allow instructors to view submitted assignments without downloading them. Instructors can even annotate the assignment without downloading the file, and then upload it with changes. The rubric and grade book will also be visible from the same screen, which means any attachment submitted by a student will be visible in the instructor’s browser, again without the instructor having to download the file.

Blackboard has also improved the “early warning” feature, now a Retention Center. This area is designed to identify at-risk behavior for students and uses research-based criteria, including turning assignments in late, having a low grade and having below average activity in the course.

In the works for future updates are improving the test deployment feature so instructors will find it easier to deploy a different set of test rules for students with special accommodations, improving access to Blackboard with a variety of tablets, rolling over dates automatically when an instructor migrates a course to a new semester, and offering instructors a true “student’s view” of the classroom rather than just the “edit” shut off currently available.

In addition to learning about the latest and greatest advances from Blackboard, attendees at MiBUG this year were treated to sessions with Blackboard users who discussed ways to get the best out of the Grade Center, to improve student engagement, to maximize Blackboard (great hints were offered in this session from Garry Brand of Grand Rapids Community College), to integrate textbooks into Blackboard, and to solve some of the trickier faculty problems involving Blackboard in online, mixed and face-to-face courses.
The Four Hallmarks of FerrisConnetiquette™

FerrisConnetiquette™ is a list of four guidelines that apply to the way students as well as faculty interact while online in any Ferris State University class, whether that class is fully online, blended, or FerrisConnect-supported.

1. **Show Respect**

   A. **Show common courtesy to others when you’re online.**
      In general, behave as you would in a traditional classroom. The people you meet online are just as real as the people you see face-to-face in class. They are sitting at their computer, just as you are, trying to succeed in the course.

   B. **Take turns.**
      Dominating a conversation, whether face-to-face or online, is rude.

   C. **If you lose your temper, don’t act on it.**
      Online communication is so fast that when they are angry, people sometimes “fire off” an email or post a comment and then later regret it. Everyone occasionally becomes angry, so you need to be especially careful not to “flame.” If you do, you will almost certainly cause damage, not only to others, but to yourself as well.

2. **Be Aware**

   A. **Be aware that you will communicate almost exclusively in writing.**

      1. Unlike in a traditional classroom, most or all communication in an online course is written, which is not as simple as face-to-face communication. Think carefully about the words you use in your written class messages, and before you post those messages, reread them for unintentional errors in tone, content, and grammar.

      2. Most people know that rudeness and loss of temper are simply wrong, but they may not be aware of how much their positive body language—gestures, nods, smiles, a pleasant tone of voice—helps them show respect to others. In almost all online situations, the only language available is written. And words by themselves can all too easily convey a disrespectful, unfriendly tone—unless you take extra care that they do not.

   B. **Be aware that, like words, symbols also matter.**

      1. Don’t use all caps because it comes across as shouting. Also, sentences that follow capitalization rules are easier to understand because they give readers information about the relative importance of certain words and about their relationships to each other.

      2. Be frugal with emoticons, extra exclamation points, and extra question marks to show your meaning or emotion. Save those for when, although you’ve tried, you just can’t find the right words to express yourself.
C. Be aware that everything you write is stored permanently on a Ferris database.
   Everything you write in emails, discussions, chats, groups, and other places in an online class becomes a permanent record of you as a student at Ferris. Let those words reflect well upon you as a respectful, intelligent human being.

D. Be aware of the multiple modes of communication possible in an online course.
   More than email and phone calls are available to you: you might communicate through discussion boards, wikis, chat rooms, web conferences, Skype, IM, blogs, and so on. Choose the mode that is the most appropriate for the time of day, the message, and the recipient. For instance, an email may be more appropriate than a phone call late at night, or a phone call may be the best choice for a detailed discussion.

E. Be aware of that large files take time to download.
   Think twice before sending a large file to someone in your class who has a relatively slow internet connection.

3. Communicate Effectively
   
   A. Effective written communication is efficient.
   
   1. If you don’t reread an online message for content and then hastily post it, you may very well leave things out that your reader needs to know. This will result in further communication, which wastes time and energy. Also, if a message contains grammar, punctuation, and other writing errors, the reader may not even understand your meaning. Therefore, efficient communication takes the writer extra time to produce...because it’s the reader’s time and understanding that are important.

   2. If your message is complex and long, compose it in your word processing program so you can use its grammar and spell check. Another strategy is to occasionally print out a “clean copy,” on which you’ll be able to spot errors better than you can on your computer screen.

   3. But before you send a message, an even more thorough way to ensure that it is efficient is to practice S^R_4S:

   S: Stop! Don’t send your message yet!

   R^1 Read what you’ve written for content: does the message contain everything you intended? If not, add. Does the message contain anything—extra information or extra words—that will waste the reader’s time? If so, delete.

   R^2 Rethink what you’ve written for tone: does the message sound respectful, diplomatic, and reasonably formal? If not, change the words that offend, perhaps with reference to your online thesaurus.

   R^3 Reread what you’ve written for organization and coherence, rearranging passages and adding transitions as needed.

   R^4 Revise what you’ve written for grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. At a minimum, use your grammar and spell check.

   S: Submit your message.
The extra time you put into your online messages will be well-spent.

B. Effective communication is prompt.

1. Whether you are discussing a topic in a discussion board, answering an email, or submitting work, don’t put it off. Be well organized and prompt in your responses to others and in fulfilling your course commitments, which involves posting and reading all course-related materials. And of course you need to communicate efficiently, which requires extra time, so don’t wait until the last minute.

2. Also, if a difficult situation has arisen, i.e. in a group, don’t delay in dealing with it because doing so will only make the problem worse. For instance, if you are a student who is having problems that interfere with your completing course assignment or group work, or if you have decided to withdraw from the course, inform your instructor as soon as possible.

C. Effective communication is clear.

1. Above all, course expectations should be clear. Instructors should communicate course expectations in the syllabus and elsewhere to the students, and if anything is not understood, students should request clarification. Clarification might be needed on such issues as the instructor’s approximate response time to a student contact, on the time by which students are expected to respond to an instructor contact, on the instructor’s grading time for assignments, and on the lead time instructors give students before assignments are due.

2. Then both parties should maintain a courteous, open dialog about their expectations of each other throughout the semester.

4. Cultivate Community

A. Help create a community of scholars.

In such a community, members cultivate cooperation, not competition. Get to know each other during the introductions, class discussions, and group work, and in any other opportunities that present themselves. Encourage a cooperative win-win attitude in which all members of the community are willing to work together, each contributing in his/her own way.

B. Don’t let members of the community down.

Others count on you to do your part. In a face-to-face class, discussions continue as long as a few people participate. But in an online class, discussions can’t proceed until you reply to the latest discussion post. Also, group work can’t proceed until you contribute your latest part of the assignment or add your writing to your group’s wiki. And remember: if you can no longer participate in your group, let your group know ASAP.

C. Be helpful.

An online class is a learning community in which members help each other to learn. You will almost certainly work in teams and you will certainly be involved in discussions. Everyone in an online discussion will be able to contribute, which is not always the case in face-to-face classes. Therefore, everyone in an online class has an equal voice: use your voice to encourage others in the class.