



# Center for Teaching Excellence Hampton University Teaching Matters

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## Teaching Excellence Related Links

- ◆ Bloom's Revised Taxonomy  
<http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/bloomrev/index.htm>
- ◆ TechLearning – Free subscription  
<http://www.techlearning.com/>

## Other Useful Links

- ◆ Stimulus Funds from the U.S. Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/03/03072009.html>

## In the Next Issue

- ◆ Best Practices for Teaching Online

## Teaching Strategies: Online Teaching

By Zina T. McGee, Ph.D.

Online teaching has become increasingly common at many institutions of higher education, and can range from hybrid courses to complete distance learning programs. This semester, the issues of Teaching Matters will be devoted to providing guidelines for creating an online course, best practices for teaching online, and strategies for assessing the quality of online education at Hampton University.

### Assessing Computer Skills in the Online Environment

In order to teach an online course, you must first have complete access to a computer and the Internet. Keep in mind that your course will be conducted entirely in cyberspace, so having the required equipment is essential. Become comfortable with the technologies you will use. While you don't need to be a computer expert to successfully teach an online course, you do need the basic knowledge of software, hardware, and tools such as a word processor, email, an Internet browser, search engines, and the BlackBoard course management system. As with ongoing workshops and seminars, comprehensive online instructor training programs are available at Hampton University to provide ample preparation in how to build and function in a virtual classroom, but remember that basic computer literacy is a requirement.

### Experience and Qualifications in the Online Environment

For several years, I have taught two sections of graduate statistics: one section completely online and the other section using the traditional model. I found that my experience using the Internet and the Web to enhance my teaching in the traditional classroom was a great first step to teaching entirely online. It made the transition from the traditional classroom to the virtual classroom more manageable, and it also facilitated an accelerated learning model that involved rethinking and redesigning my teaching materials to fit the needs of the online environment. While the online classroom requires new teaching strategies and instructional techniques, you should not try to recreate the “on-ground” classroom in the online paradigm. Instead, you will be able to lead a more successful online course if you facilitate learning while demonstrating confidence in the system. With this in mind, it would be

best to begin by teaching a course online that you have a familiarity with in the traditional classroom. As with the regular classroom, you will need to show that you have practical and professional experience in the subject matter you wish to teach online as your academic and professional qualifications will continue to be evaluated in the virtual classroom. Although it is not a requirement, if you have had first-hand experience as an online student, you will likely have greater insight into your own online students' needs and a better understanding of special requirements of the online environment.

### **Attitudes about Learning in the Online Environment**

Research has suggested that an online instructor should be able to accept the value of facilitated learning as equal to the traditional model. If one feels that the only way a true learning process can take place is through the traditional means of educating in a classroom, this person may not be successful in using the online paradigm. In this regard, it is important to understand that high-quality learning can take place with interacting with students face-to-face, and in some instances, lecturing may not be the best method for delivering education in your field. Discussion can also be an effective strategy for your subject matter, and the virtual environment allows for a variety of teaching strategies and structured activities that help students learn from you and from each other.

In my online course, I have used email and a listserv as important parts of my teaching in addition to quantitative research methodology web-pages to supplement posted tutorials on how to run syntax and analyze results. Online quizzes that require calculations help students to prepare for examinations and research reports, while the discussion board or chat room allow for interaction among peers as well as a sense of community, both of which are essential elements of online courses. In fact, studies have shown that the online peer-to-peer model can be as effective as instructor-to-student interaction.

### **Teaching Styles and Habits in the Online Environment**

As with others, I too have found that teaching online requires just as much, if not more time and dedication. There is a greater sense of urgency in the virtual classroom to having questions answered in a timely manner and having resources readily available to complete all assignments. This is understandable given that online students cannot ask questions openly in the classroom or visit our office for further clarification. For these reasons, the online instructor must be able to compensate for the lack of physical presence in the virtual classroom by creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable participating and know that their instructor is accessible. If not, alienation can quickly occur between the instructor and students as well as among the students themselves. An online instructor should be willing to give individual attention to students who may need extra time and help. For example, I try to make it clear to students that I am more concerned with their ability to understand the syntax that they have created to run

statistical tests rather than simply turning in the data to meet the deadline. Being sensitive, open and flexible is a necessity to promote a successful learning environment, especially where due dates, absences, and make-ups are involved. It is also important to be able to dedicate several hours a week to participate in the online teaching process. You should also be willing to log on regularly and contribute to the online classroom discussions. A successful online facilitator should feel comfortable communicating in writing. The face-to-face contact traditionally available in a classroom setting is gone in the online learning process. The ability to verbally communicate is replaced with a keyboard, and this communication is intense and demanding. An online instructor should be able to introduce critical thinking into the learning process. The process is designed to facilitate the easy assimilation of theory into concept and application. Students are expecting to receive knowledge and abilities that are usable today. Online learning also increases problem-solving abilities of students. Having to read and respond to the views of their classmates requires students to evaluate different views on a topic or issue.

### **Training and Commitment in the Online Environment**

An online instructor should be experienced and well- trained in online teaching methods. Knowledge of the use of the tools used in facilitating online programs, the appropriate methods used in communicating with online students, the ability to control the flow of work in the virtual classroom, and how to prepare a course for presentation in the online environment are just a few of the expectations placed on a facilitator. The faculty member must feel comfortable with these methods and the technologies needed to implement them, and this can be gained through exposure to training in online instruction. An online instructor plays a vital role in developing and maintaining an effective online learning environment and must possess a unique set of tools to perform successfully. Some highly seasoned instructors from the traditional classroom environment will easily adapt to the online model, while others may find the transition challenging at first. Reflect on your teaching style, circumstances and technical skills to see if teaching online is right for you.

## **Engaging Students with Synchronous Methods in Online Courses**

In an email interview with *Online Classroom*, Mike Scheuermann, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Instructional Technology Support at Drexel University, addressed the topics he talked about during a seminar.

***OC: What advantages does synchronous learning offer?***

**Scheuermann:** It serves to deepen the learning experience for the course participants by adding a rich dimension to the engagement. This holds true with regard to student-to-instructor interaction, student-to-content

interaction, and most importantly, student-to-student interaction.

*OC: How do you balance the use of synchronous elements with students' need for flexibility?*

**Scheuermann:** The asynchronous course elements provide sufficient flexibility. Most every student finds a way to make our online chats. This has held true for several years, actually. As I receive end-of-course feedback on how the chats were scheduled, designed, and held—I have made modifications to their layout, etc. across the academic terms. Further, if enrollment is sufficient, we might have Tuesday, Wednesday, and/or Thursday evening chats in my course. When that is the case, students can swap nights with each other, on a chat-by-chat basis, or for all chats across the course.

*OC: Which technologies support synchronous learning? Could you provide examples of how instructors might use the synchronous features of these tools?*

**Scheuermann:** There are several common features inherent in synchronous online learning tools. There is normally audio and video in addition to the usual text chat, archiving, an interactive or collaborative whiteboard, polling, hand-raising, private messaging, and, in some cases, application- or desktop-sharing. Instructors might require chat participants to make an audio response to a particular question. This would, of course, encourage students to be well-prepared for that chat's topics.

*OC: How do you select which activities are suited to synchronous delivery?*

**Scheuermann:** The standard answer there is to always consider the academic objectives first—and then match the online tools or those tools' features to those objectives. For instance, in the case of real-time chat, I can pre-select evocative, open-ended questions that are related to the reading assignment that will encourage students to study the topics more thoroughly ahead of time. My objective there would be to have them fully understand certain key topics—and to be able to apply them in real life.

*OC: How do you coordinate what goes on asynchronously and things that go on synchronously?*

**Scheuermann:** Those activities all align with the reading assignments. For example, the first four text chapters, which we discuss in the first of four online chats in one particular course, are the same chapters on which the threaded discussion topics are based, in weeks one and two of the course. This holds true for the other three online chats and their respective weeks and related reading assignments as well.

## Resources

Teaching Online: [www.palomar.edu/atrc/teachingonline.htm](http://www.palomar.edu/atrc/teachingonline.htm)

Teaching Tips: [www.ctdlc.org/Faculty/TeachingTips/index.html](http://www.ctdlc.org/Faculty/TeachingTips/index.html)

Tips and Tricks for Teaching Online: How to Teach Like a Pro!  
[itdl.org/journal/oct\\_04/article04.htm](http://itdl.org/journal/oct_04/article04.htm)

Academic Technology Newsletters | Faculty to Faculty – Tips ...  
[newsletters.at.ufl.edu/tbd/feb-mar-2009/faculty-to-fa...](http://newsletters.at.ufl.edu/tbd/feb-mar-2009/faculty-to-fa...)

Brainstorm in Progress: 12 Time-Saving Tips for Teaching Online  
[cain.blogspot.com/2009/07/12-time-saving-tips-in-onli...](http://cain.blogspot.com/2009/07/12-time-saving-tips-in-onli...)

Teaching Tips: [honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/](http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/)

## Announcements

Applications for the Spring 2011 Scholar-in-Residence Program also are available online - Learn more at <http://www.nyu.edu/frn/programs.events/scholar.in.residence/> Application deadline Friday, Sept. 10, 2010. The Call for Proposals for the 2010 FRN National Symposium on "Engaging Students in the Community and the World" has been posted at <http://www.nyu.edu/frn/programs.events/national.symposium/2010.national.symp.callproposals.html> Submissions will be accepted until Friday, April 9, 2010.

Registration is now open for AAC&U's spring Network for Academic Renewal meetings: General Education and Assessment: Maintaining Momentum, Achieving New Priorities, February 18-20, 2010, in Seattle, Washington; and Faculty Roles in High-Impact Practices, March 25-27, 2010, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The general education meeting will bring campus practitioners together to discuss maintaining momentum in general education reform and creating effective assessment plans, especially in tough economic times. It will feature a keynote address by Robert Weisbuch, president of Drew University. The faculty roles meeting will explore how to support faculty in developing and using high-impact practices to increase student achievement and help students examine the "big questions." Nancy Cantor, chancellor and president of Syracuse University, will be the featured speaker. An early registration discount is available through March 1 for the faculty roles meeting. Both meetings will feature practical solutions that participants can implement on their own campuses.

Applications are currently being accepted online and by mail for campus teams to attend one of AAC&U's 2010 summer institute: Engaging Departments Institute, July 7-11 at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Applications are due March 19 for Engaging Departments.

Institutes offer campus leadership teams a time and place for sustained collaborative work on an important project—away from the daily pressures of campus life. Details about each institute and how to apply are available online.

Early-career STEM faculty are invited to apply for the Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL) Summer Faculty Leadership Institute, July 17-22, 2010, in Crestone, CO, on the Baca campus of Colorado College. The institute is designed around a carefully coordinated blend of theory and practice, weaving discussions of national issues into sessions on the politics of change. Institute mentors guide the conversations and institute sessions and work with participants on pedagogical approaches for STEM classes, including case studies, role-playing, field trips, and collaborative problem solving. The Summer Leadership Institute is supported by the NSF and all costs at the institute are covered, except travel to and from the institute site. However, travel stipends are available for faculty from HBCUs and from HSI. Applications are due March 12, 2010.

Submit Proposals for Fall 2010 Meeting on Diversity, Learning, and Pathways to Inclusive Excellence, Proposals are now being accepted for AAC&U's Network for Academic Renewal meeting, Facing the Divides: Diversity, Learning, and Pathways to Inclusive Excellence, to be held October 21-23, 2010, in Houston, Texas. The meeting will focus on pragmatic ways in which colleges and university leaders can foster inclusive learning environments and help students to engage with each other across differences, respectfully and productively. The conference will include five primary themes:

- Framing Goals for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence
- Ensuring Access and Essential Learning
- Developing and Assessing Curricular and Co-Curricular Efforts
- Fostering Identity, Civility, and Democratic Classrooms
- Building Institutional Capacity to Make Excellence Inclusive

For details about each theme and information about how to submit a proposal, see the Call for Proposals. Proposals are due March 15, 2010.

We invite you to submit a paper/abstract to, and/or to organize an Invited session in, The SUMMER 8th International Conference on Computing, Communications, and Control Technologies: CCCT 2010 (<http://www.2010iisconferences.org/ccctj>), which is being organized in the context of The 3rd International Multi-Conference on Engineering and Technological Innovation: IMETI 2010 (<http://www.2010iisconferences.org/imeti>) to be held on June 29-July 2, 2010 in Orlando, FL, USA. The deadlines are the following: Papers/Abstracts Submissions and Invited Sessions Proposals: Feb. 17th, 2010 Authors Notifications: March 12th, 2010, Camera-ready, full papers: May 19th, 2010