

## **Web-Enhanced Teaching: Advantages of Integrating Technology into the Large Lecture Course**

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### **Abstract**

Web-Enhanced courses are effective in transforming the large lecture course to a small-scale course. The purpose of this presentation is to identify the advantages to both faculty and students in web-enhanced course environments.

The benefits to faculty and students revolve around access and flexibility. In addition, students are better prepared to enroll in future web-based courses and faculty may use it as a stepping stone to eventually offer a web-based course.

### **Proceeding**

Web-Enhanced courses are effective in transforming the large lecture course to a small-scale course. The purpose of this presentation was to identify the advantages to both faculty and students in web-enhanced course environments. Advantages to both faculty and student include access and flexibility. Students may access online course notes if absent which is valuable to both faculty and students. It also allows for flexibility for students who work or have a rigorous course schedule. An additional outcome of this type of environment is a student-centered learning approach.

Providing students with study guides, course notes, FAQ's, and resources relevant to the course enables the active learner. This allows the faculty member to keep current with their course curriculum. The flexibility with the online information is that it can be easily updated. Currency in information is not only important for the student but for the faculty member.

Involving a quiz component, that may be graded or not graded, saves the faculty member time of grading and allows the student to take the test at his or her own convenience. An ungraded quiz can be used to help students learn material at their own pace and serve as a knowledge assessment tool.

Adding a discussion board to a face-to-face classroom extends the classroom community into an electronic community. The discussion boards may be found through a course management tool, such as Blackboard or WebCT, or as a shareware/freeware from independent programmers. An example of an independent program would be First Class as this tool is predominantly used for conversation and writing collaboration. Another

tool used to incorporate a classroom community would be a class list serve. The advantages of asynchronous communication tools are the availability for the student to share ideas, discuss problems, and provide solutions among each other. Students learning from students is a pedagogically sought after approach to building a knowledge base.

With the use of active learning, students cannot respond passively and are more willing to discuss the subject matter in more detail anytime and anywhere than in a face-to-face environment. This pedagogical method supports competent critical thinking skills along with the writing in the curriculum. The faculty is able to monitor and guide independent learning and discussions, again anytime and anywhere, into learning experiences for the entire class. Students feel a part of a learning community and the faculty member has an idea of the learning growth in the students. The faculty also is able to incorporate real-world situations and allow communication with experts, including world-renowned guest lecturers.

Proper evaluation and monitoring the discussion area is critical. The course objectives and requirements for discussions must be very detailed and well planned. The discussion requirement may be substantial portion of the final grade. Students are required to post validated or supported discussions each week. Students are also required to reply, which may be a challenge or an agreement, to their classmates with the same level of validation and support for their statement. This ensures that the students are accessing and evaluating research that is relevant to the topic area for that weekly module.

The opportunities of discussion boards are endless. Integrating a face-to-face and an online class allows for good discussion and team project development. Previous experience is that the face-to-face students are impressed with the reality of pulling together group projects without meeting other students face-to-face. It has been noted that discussions are at a higher level of learning online as opposed to 20-30% of the students interacting within a traditional classroom. An intriguing activity is to allow students to self select their groups. Personal sketch or bio area supports the self-selection activity. It has been found that group projects do not suffer creativity when integrating online and face-to-face classrooms. In an online environment, students keep other students on task with group projects. Faculties have complete access to student discussion and are able to monitor student involvement and interaction. This allows the professor to ensure that all students equally participate in the group project.

While the majority of the students may be computer literate, there is an intrinsic need for knowing how to apply the technology. Utilizing web-enhanced courses in the undergraduate level will prepare students in the future if they opt to enroll in a web-based course. In addition to the benefits to the students, the experiences gained with web-enhanced teaching would serve as a stepping stone for faculties that want to eventually offer a web-based course. Students, in turn, would benefit by having the online concept introduced gradually and perhaps increase their confidence in enrolling in an online course.

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