Spectrum

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Online "Chat" in the Academic Classroom

Over the past several years, more and more faculty have begun using Blackboard and other online media for distribution of course materials, test administration, asynchronous discussion (bulletin boards) and grade dissemination. One virtual component getting less attention in academic circles is synchronous discussion or chat.

Chat is a feature that many students use for social interaction on a regular basis. It is also a tool that has great potential in the university classroom. The challenge we face as faculty is to harness students' enthusiasm for chat while refocusing their skills for appropriate participation for academic purposes.

In order to successfully convert students' chat skills to academic discussion proficiency, we need to be certain students understand the objectives for the focused chat session. Faculty need to establish the "ground rules" of accepted behavior (often called "netiquette") and outline to students what level of participation is expected. Providing an overview of the academic objective for the chat session along with detailed and specific guidelines for how and when to participate will give students assistance in making the switch from social to academic chat.

Additionally, students need some "practice" time to acclimate to the adaptation of their familiar technology to a new environment. During the first online discussion, the faculty member might include a short icebreaker to assist students in becoming comfortable with the classroom's virtual environment. The initial session will be most successful if there is no pressure attached (grades, minimal participation expectations, etc.). It is appropriate to move from the icebreaker into a more structured, graded segment in the same session.

Below is a listing of select online resources that may provide additional assistance with online synchronous discussion. Faculty Development offers workshops on conducting successful chat sessions and also provides consultations to those interested in setting up live discussions in Blackboard. Please email us at facdev@niu.edu for more information or to set up an appointment. Links to online resources:

- Netiquette Home Page: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html
- University of West Alabama Chat Room Policy: http://tigerpaw.uwa.edu/admin10b.htm
- Synchronous Online Learning Instructor Competencies: http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/research/OnlineSkills.shtml
- The Importance of Being Synchronous: http://wac.colostate.edu/aw/teaching/haefner2000.htm
- Importance of Synchronous Discussion Tools: http://users.chariot.net.au/~michaelc/synch/surv_discuss.htm
- Synchronous Group Discussion: http://www.ncolr.org/jiol/ARCHIVES/2002/2/04/Index.pdf

Spring 2005

Deadlines to Note

Outstanding TA Award Nominations – March 1, 2005

Outstanding Teaching Award Nominations – March 25, 2005

Faculty Development Grant Proposals – April 8, 2005

SPS Development Grant Proposals – April 22, 2005

Conference on Portfolio Integration: Connecting Learning and Assessment

Join faculty, students, administrators, and support staff from NIU and regional institutions on Friday, March 4, 2005 from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm at the Holmes Student Center to learn more about portfolio integration for learning and assessment. The conference will include a keynote presentation by Kathleen Yancey, the R. Roy Pearce Professor of Professional Communication at Clemson University, and concurrent tracks on Portfolio Basics, General Education, Portfolio Mechanics, Teacher Certification, Assessment, Best Practices, Electronic Portfolios, and Institutional Support. For registration and additional information, please visit: http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/conference/portfolio.htm.

Students enter our classes today with a wide range of experiences with technology. Many have grown up using technology and are very familiar with using it for social or personal reasons but are much less experienced with the possible educational applications.

Technological advances in education have given rise in recent years to the terms "online learning" and "e-learning". While the specific definitions associated with these terms vary among educational contexts they generally refer to an approach of facilitating and enhancing learning using personal computers and the Internet (www.wikipedia.org). NIU faculty are provided with the Blackboard course management system which can be utilized in many different ways to enhance the learning experiences for students. Many NIU faculty are now using Blackboard to accomplish such educational tasks as deliver course materials electronically, facilitate collaborative learning and group work, post grades, and communicate both synchronously and asynchronously with students.

The online learning experience is likely to be a new one for most students in your class. Much research is currently being conducted in academia to determine the most effective measures to preparing students for successful online learning experiences. Studies are showing that students are much more likely to enjoy success learning online if they are provided with opportunities to develop the prerequisite technological skills and essential learning behaviors.

It is therefore important that students have an understanding of the expectations associated with online learning. Here are some basic guidelines for participating in online learning activities to share with your students at the beginning of the semester, courtesy of the Indiana College Network (www.icn.org):

- Check your email frequently.
- Keep in contact with your instructor.
- Allow a reasonable amount of time for instructor response.
- Advise the instructor promptly of any changes in your email address and/or telephone numbers.
- Interact with your classmates as much as possible.
- Keep up with weekly assignments.
- When in doubt, ask questions.
- Be open to this new method of instruction and have fun.

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center is pursuing the development of tools that faculty can utilize to help prepare students for a successful learning experience in your web-enhanced or online course. Watch for more details in future editions of the Spectrum and on the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center website at: http://www.niu.edu/facdev. Links to additional resources on the topic of learner preparedness for online learning are available online at: http://www.niu.edu/facdev/resources/teaching_online/preparing_students.htm. More information on the workshops on teaching with Blackboard can be found at: http://www.niu.edu/facdev/events/current.htm.

Call for Faculty Development Grant Proposals

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center offers a number of grants up to $2,500 each annually to regular continuing faculty (tenured or tenure track). The purpose of these grants is to encourage and support faculty development activities such as attending/arranging workshops or seminars for teaching improvement, new learnings that include supplemental training that is not available on campus, learning or development of new technologies for teaching, and career redirection. Proposed development activities must directly benefit applicants' department, college and/or the university. Five (5) copies (the signed original and four copies) of each proposal including the proposal cover sheet, letters of support from the applicant's chair and the dean, and other supporting documents must be submitted to the *Grant Review Sub-Committee of the Faculty Development Advisory Committee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University* by Friday, April 8, 2005 for activities proposed between July 1 and December 31, 2005. For more information, visit: http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/development/grants/fdgrant3.htm

Call for SPS Development Grant Proposals

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, with the support of Human Resource Services, offers a number of grants of up to $1,000 each to Supportive Professional Staff. These grants are awarded to individuals who are pursuing professional development that will benefit the individuals in their professional growth as well as their units and NIU. Five (5) copies (the signed original and four copies) of each proposal including the proposal cover sheet and accompanying letters of support and other relevant documents must be submitted to the *SPS Awards Committee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University* by Friday, April 22, 2005 for activities proposed between July 1 and December 31, 2005. For more information visit: http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/development/grants/spsgrfal.htm

Over the years many of us have acquired a library of books and resources that have helped us to become better at what we do. Textbooks are content-specific and are meant to be read by our students. Field-related resources are often multidisciplinary and can be included among those on recommended reading lists. We then have the "nuts and bolts" series of books that provide us with techniques, methods, and strategies that enhance our natural talents in the classroom. Here is an annotated list of a few resources that you might find useful. Annotations have been excerpted from book jackets. Complete references for each text are listed below.

Active Learning, by M. Silberman, provides dozens of active learning strategies to enliven college and adult classrooms that can be used to teach virtually any subject. The book contains a comprehensive collection of active learning techniques that are described with clear, step-by-step instructions. If you are committed to making learning active but occasionally run out of steam, this is the book to get you back on track with fresh ideas and innovative strategies. This is an excellent book for new professors.

Making Instruction Work, by R. F. Mager, is a step-by-step guide to designing and developing instruction that achieves your objectives. Learn techniques that you can apply immediately to make your instruction more lean, on target, and effective. Mager writes in an easy-to-understand and approachable style and helps simplify the task of developing instruction, giving you practical procedures for increasing its effectiveness and efficiency. The book takes you step-by-step through the design and development process, providing an invaluable overview of the steps critical to achieving your instructional goals. Use Mager's book to improve existing courses, give students the desire to apply what they have learned, and eliminate unnecessary content. Use this book in conjunction with Mager's *Preparing Instructional Objectives.*

Non-Designer's Design Book, by R. Williams, is filled with design and typography principles drawn from Willliams' years of teaching and design experience. The book is an essential guide for anyone working with design and type and is a straightforward, lighthearted approach to design. Using numerous examples, Williams shows you how to go from wimpy to wow just by following basic design principles. Use this resource if you want to make your printed pages look better, want to learn more about design, want to type on your page to be more dynamic, or want people to read what you create.

Preparing Instructional Objectives, by R. F. Mager, artfully explains that instructional objectives are the cornerstone of successful instruction. When written well, they enable you to identify appropriate content for your instruction, organize your instruction in the best way possible, and create tools to accurately determine if instruction is achieving your goals. The book is a systematic guide to identifying, selecting, and writing objectives that create the foundation for instructional success. Learn how to select the best content and methods for achieving your objectives, provide learners with a road map to guide them through the learning process, give learners a better chance of succeeding, and demonstrate the value of what you are teaching. Use this book in conjunction with Mager's *Making Instruction Work.*

Presentation Games, by E. Scannell and J. Newstrom, can be used to help keep an audience from becoming bored or restless during a presentation. Use interactive games and activities specifically designed to build rapport and warm up the audience, generate lively discussions, reinforce key points of your message, and win back an audience that's tuned out. Each game is fast, creative, and easy-to-lead, and costs little or nothing. Included are session openers, icebreakers, audience brainteasers, and motivational activities.

Resources

Mager, R. F. (1997). *Making instruction work or skillbloomers: A step-by-step guide to designing and developing instruction that works* (2nd ed.). Atlanta, GA: The Center for Effective Performance, Inc.

Mager, R. F. (1997). *Preparing instructional objectives: A critical tool in the development of effective instruction* (3rd ed.). Atlanta, GA: The Center for Effective Performance, Inc.

Scannell, E., & Newstrom, J. (1998). *The big book of presentation games: Wake-em up tricks, ice breakers, and other fun stuff*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Silberman, M. (1996). *Active learning: 101 strategies to teach any subject*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Williams, R. (2004). *The non-designer's design book: Design and typographic principles for the visual novice* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.

Call for Nominations: 2005 Outstanding Teaching Awards

The purpose of these awards is to acknowledge and recognize outstanding contributions of non-tenure track educators (instructors, SPS, civil service staff, and adjunct faculty who teach) to the teaching mission of Northern Illinois University. Each recipient of the award will be presented with a plaque and recognized at a reception held at the end of the spring semester. Five copies of each nomination should be submitted to "Outstanding Teaching Awards Committee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University" by March 25, 2005. For more information on eligibility and the nomination process, visit: http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/information/nteaward.doc.

Responsible Management of Research Data Page 4

Who owns your research data? What proactive steps should you take in selecting or collecting data from different sources? Can you share your research data with others? Who can and cannot access your research data? These are some of the questions researchers in the early stages of their careers may face concerning the management of research data. Their responses, if inappropriate, can result in scientific misconduct and may even impact lives.

Questions such as these are the focus of instruction in a recently completed online module on research data management. The purpose of the module is to increase researchers' awareness of these issues and help them deal with the issues responsibly. The module can be found online at http://www.niu.edu/rcrportal. Funding for the project comes from a Responsible Conduct of Research Education Grant awarded to Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center by the Office of Research Integrity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

The module is available in both html and Flash™ versions; it includes easily readable content, quizzes for self-testing, Macromedia Flash-based interactive games, case studies in a decision-tree format, video vignettes to supplement the case studies, a discussion board for reflection, and a pop-up glossary of definitions that appears when the cursor moves over specific terms. The module was designed to provide users a quick overview of the content of various topics under data management and also engage users in active learning strategies including interactive games, quizzes, cases, and reflection.

The module was developed collaboratively at NIU with the help of faculty, staff, and students from a number of academic, administrative, support units. Although the content was compiled from various sources, including existing literature, faculty from numerous departments at NIU contributed their perspectives and experiences regarding issues they have found compromise data in both quantitative and qualitative research. The case scenarios supplies by some of the faculty have been supplemented with video vignettes produced with the help of the faculty and students of the School of Theatre and Dance, and the staff of Division of Media Services. The Flash version of the module was developed with the support of the staff from E-Learning Services at NIU.

The module can be used as a supplementary resource in courses or seminars on research or as a self-paced learning tool by anyone. The module covers a range of research data management topics such as data selection, collection, handling, analysis, publication, and ownership. Users can freely explore the module as it does not require any special login, passwords, or approval, and the module does not collect any data from users.

Due to the success of this module, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center has received another grant from the Office of Research Integrity to develop two more modules on Mentoring and Collaborative Research. For more information on the module, please contact Dan Cabrera, Multimedia Coordinator at 815-753-0613 or dcabrera@niu.edu.

Call for Nominations: 2005 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards

The purpose of these awards is to acknowledge and recognize outstanding graduate teaching assistants for their contributions to the teaching mission of Northern Illinois University. Each recipient of the award will be presented with a plaque and recognized at a reception held at the end of the spring semester. Five copies of each nomination should be submitted to "Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award Committee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University" by March 1, 2005. For more information on the awards and nomination process, visit: http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/ta/taaward.doc.