

TRANSITIONING FROM TRADITIONAL TO 8-WEEK BLENDED DELIVERY: A CASE STUDY IN ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper describes the implementation and preliminary results of a new delivery method for all adult education courses at a small, 4-year, liberal arts institution of higher education in Ohio. Beginning in Summer 2016, all courses in Professional and Graduate Studies transitioned from a 12-week or 3-week face-to-face format, which ran parallel to courses offered in the Traditional College, to an 8-week blended format, with two sessions offered every semester. We address the economic and pedagogical rationale for this change and report on challenges and successes in the first year of implementation.

Introduction

Many adult learners continue their education for job advancement but struggle to balance the demands of work, family, and education. In 2011, 72% of U.S. undergraduate students worked, and 20% worked full-time (Davis, 2012). In the Professional and Graduate Studies (PGS) program at Hiram College (HC), a private liberal arts institution in NE Ohio, the percentages are more pronounced: 93% of the students work, with 52% working full-time or more. Blended learning can help meet the scheduling needs of these students. In the state of Ohio, it is defined as “the delivery of instruction in a combination of time in a supervised physical location away from home and online delivery whereby the student has some element of control over time, place, path, or pace of learning” (33 Ohio Rev. Code, 2005, 3301.079 K1). Blended learning provides a flexible option for continuing education, and research has shown it is as or more effective than other delivery methods in student engagement and learning outcomes (Gross, Pietri, Anderson, Moyano-Camihort, & Graham, 2015). In addition, research reveals that students who begin at a two-year college with the intent to complete at a four-year institution, and students who take more than four years to graduate, prefer a blended approach (Fleming, 2015); both populations are represented in PGS. For these reasons, for the last six years the *NMC Horizon Report* has included blended learning in its list of top trends in higher education, noting in particular its role in “increasing flexibility and convenience for students” (Adams Becker et al., 2017, p. 18).

There were multiple goals for a transition involving both the academic calendar and delivery mode. Those goals included: to create more opportunities for students to start a degree program with HC throughout the year; to create more flexibility for students through both the calendar and the blended delivery mode; to increase student access to course content and activities; to better align HC's calendar with those of our academic partners; and through all of these efforts, to increase enrollment.

There has been a recent move among some two-year institutions to abandon a traditional 15-week semester followed by a finals week in favor of two back-to-back eight-week sessions. One reason is that the increased scheduling choices available in "fast and furious" eight-week sessions allow students to utilize their time more efficiently and therefore create more "flexible pathways to graduation" (Chernikova & Varonis, 2016, p. 3). In addition, such a format provides benefits to faculty as well, including the ability to take several months off instead of an entire semester (Reed, 2017).

A significant part of the PGS population includes students who are completing their degrees through a community college partnership completion program. Community colleges in Ohio are limited to offering the associate degree; however, articulation agreements between institutions at the state level have provided a pathway for students to optimize transfer credits from their two-year degree in completing a four-year degree at another institution. HC has three program partners: Lorain County Community College, Lakeland Community College, and Cuyahoga Community College.

As each of HC's two-year college partners had 8-week session terms in place, in Summer 2016 HC's PGS transitioned from traditional face-to-face delivery to blended delivery in eight-week sessions in order to provide more flexible scheduling options and to increase enrollment. Courses are now offered face-to-face and online format alternating weeks, with the first meeting always taking place face-to-face. Implementation included face-to-face and online professional development for faculty in best practices for blended learning, including use of the learning management system (LMS), as well as an online module for students on the use of LMS tools.

Hiram College: A Long History of Innovation in the Liberal Arts

Hiram College is a small, private, non-profit liberal arts institution of higher education in NE Ohio established in 1850 as the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute. James Garfield, who later became President of the United States, was a student from 1851-1853 and returned in 1856 as a teacher and then principal. The college has a firm commitment to liberal arts education and encouraging innovation in both the curriculum and its students. Its mission is "to foster intellectual excellence and social responsibility, enabling our students to thrive in their chosen careers, flourish in life, and face the urgent challenges of the times" (Hiram College, 2017, para. 1) with its core values identified as: community, learning, responsibility, diversity, and innovation (Hiram College, 2017, para. 3-7).

In 1931, faculty introduced a novel plan for short, intensive summer courses that allowed students to focus on only one subject for six weeks, frequently off-campus, and earn full credit. After two additional summer pilots, the "Hiram Plan," standardized to seven-week sessions, was adopted in 1934 for all courses year-round. The success of this plan led to Hiram College's identification by the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1954 as "The Happiest College in the Land" (Clark, 1954).

While the College eventually returned to a traditional 15-week semester, it innovated again in 1995 by introducing a new "Hiram Plan," a split semester including a 12-week session followed by a 3-week session each semester. In the 3-week sessions, students enroll in one intensive course, many of which involve study abroad and internships. Until 2016, both Traditional College and PGS students followed the same 12-3 schedule, though for reasons of scheduling it proved a better fit for the Traditional College than for PGS. Many of the PGS students simply "skipped" enrolling for the three-week term, which resulted in decreased credits earned each semester. This prompted a re-examination of the schedule in order to help PGS students continuously move forward on a pathway towards graduation.

The Traditional College

The Traditional College (TC) represents the largest student group at Hiram College. The TC is composed of traditional students (ages 18-24); they are recent high school graduates, and approximately 80% live on campus. While the TC offers courses only during the fall and spring semesters, PGS offers courses year-round.

Professional and Graduate Studies

Professional and Graduate Studies began as the Weekend College in 1977. It was the first evening and weekend program aimed at working adults in the state of Ohio and the second in the country at the time of its founding. Today, the program has expanded to include the Weekend College at the HC main campus, three community college partnerships, and two fully online degree programs. The population PGS seeks to attract are non-traditional students who balance family, work, and school. To accommodate their schedules, all classes are held on Thursday and Friday evenings and on Saturday mornings and afternoons. It is possible for students who begin their academic career with a community college partner to complete their undergraduate degree by taking courses offered by HC on the community college campus.

PGS currently includes eight full-time employees: Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (first author); Director of Enrollment; four Program Counselors; an Academic Support Coordinator, and an Instructional Designer (second author). Most faculty are adjuncts, but some full-time TC faculty teach for PGS during the summer or as part of their regular load during the academic year. The courses they teach are the same as those offered during the regular academic year.

When the Weekend College began, it operated on the same 12-week, three-week term schedule as the Traditional College. During the 12-week term, classes met face-to-face every other weekend, allowing working adults to take classes on the weekends and balance work and family responsibilities. At the same time, in the absence of an online presence for the courses, students typically worked in spurts every two weeks rather than by interacting steadily with course content and activities throughout the term. In contrast, during the three-week part of the term, classes met for a demanding eight-hour day three weekends in a row with no weekends "off." In the early days of the Weekend College, enrollment in the three-week term was comparable to that in the 12-

week, but in the last five years, enrollment in the three-week steadily declined. While the intensive three-week format is a good fit for traditional, residential students who can utilize those short sessions to take a single course, study abroad, or engage in experiential learning, PGS students had difficulty managing the intensive time commitment, and the fact they did not enroll in the three-week term tended to increase the time expected for degree completion.

PGS had also developed two fully online degree programs, in Accounting and Financial Management and in Business Management. Online courses were always offered on an 8-week schedule, further complicating the academic calendar. While online courses have always been directed at PGS students, TC students are permitted to enroll in them during the summer, but must seek special permission to take online PGS courses during the traditional academic year.

Transition to Blended 8-week Courses: Summer 2016

There were multiple reasons to consider an alternative schedule and method of delivery for PGS courses. The primary reason for an 8-week schedule was to provide more starting points within a semester to attract new students on a consistent, rolling admissions cycle. A second reason was to provide more flexibility for working adults. For example, if job commitments made it impossible for a student to attend class for a portion of a 12-week term, the student would have to wait until the next semester to enroll and thus delay steady progress towards a degree. However, with eight-week terms, the same student could enroll in a course during the part of the term not affected by the work commitment. This possibility would therefore enhance student opportunities for course and degree completion. Another reason was to drive enrollment by offering a schedule that aligned with the schedule of community college partners and the current online calendar. Transitioning to an eight-week schedule could address all of these concerns. Transitioning to blended delivery mode within the eight-week format provided several other benefits. First, despite the shorter term, students would maintain much-needed opportunities to enjoy other aspects of their lives during the weeks they were not on-campus and better balance work, school, and family life. Second, technology-enhanced learning would give them 24/7 access to course materials and the ability to complete assignments from a distance, thus allowing a more even distribution of activities and assignments throughout the course.

Blended delivery necessitated the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) in all PGS courses, including those taught by faculty who had never used an LMS before. While an LMS was introduced at HC in 2007, and the Moodle LMS adopted in 2012, neither TC nor PGS faculty were required to utilize it. The College experimented with several measures to support faculty in the use of the LMS including an instructional designer (ID), a cadre of faculty mentors, and an Instructional Technology administrator. These varying positions provided individual faculty support, faculty development sessions, and the creation of support materials such as written documents and resource videos. Over time, however, the college cut the initial instructional design position.

When the decision was made to shift PGS to an 8-week, blended format, we began with a pilot that involved three courses in spring, 2016. The transition involved planning class sessions that involved meeting students face-to-face in the odd-numbered weeks, beginning with Week 1, and interacting with them solely online in the even-numbered weeks, including the final week. Following the pilot, the blended delivery format was introduced throughout PGS in a “soft” rollout with the summer 1 8-week session in May 2016. To help faculty prepare for the new format, we held an all-day faculty development workshop in March. The associate dean interviewed instructors in the pilot program to seek advice regarding successes and challenges and planned sessions for the faculty development day to support these early lessons.

In May 2016, the senior administrators of HC supported the hiring of a new ID for PGS to: provide professional development to PGS faculty in the use of the Moodle; to assist PGS faculty with the design and development of their own courses; and to create a Moodle orientation for PGS students. Several weeks after her arrival, the Instructional Technology administrator left the College, and therefore the ID assumed full Moodle admin privileges and became the point of contact for all Hiram College faculty requesting assistance with Moodle and other learning technologies.

Student and Faculty Training Resources

The transition to blended delivery was primarily motivated by the desire to facilitate student interaction with their courses by providing online access to course resources and activities during the "online" weeks. However, some faculty and students had limited or no experience with Moodle and therefore training resources were planned for both groups.

For Students: Moodle Module 0

An orientation to student Moodle use was designed as a Moodle module (section) and then added to every PGS Moodle site beginning in fall, 2016. This orientation was created using the Moodle “page” tool, which provides an html toolbar and the ability to create original text and include multimedia. The aim was to provide an overall orientation to the use of Moodle, including user preferences, and a demonstration of the steps for submitting work through commonly used Moodle activity tools. Topics included: Getting Started; The Moodle Homepage; Your Course Homepage; Participants and Profiles; News Forum; Course Content; Assignments; Quizzes and Exams; Forums; Grades; Activity Reports; Communicating with Your Instructor and Peers; and The Hiram College Helpdesk.

The Orientation was intentionally designed as a resource, not as a tutorial with assessments that students were required to work through, so its use was optional. However, faculty informally reported that they directed students to the Orientation and that it facilitates student use of Moodle tools.

For Faculty: Professional Development Workshops

A variety of professional development opportunities helped to prepare faculty for the change in delivery, provide continuing opportunities to focus on tools and pedagogy, and reflect on the change at the end of the first year.

Spring 2016. A one-day workshop to prepare faculty for the change in delivery was offered in March 2016, with sessions offered by the Associate Dean and faculty experienced with utilizing Moodle. Seven formal session topics included:

1. An opening session that focused on learning objectives and balancing face-to-face and online time in the blended environment
2. Moodle basics
3. A lunch address by the Vice President of Enrollment on the economic driver for transitioning to blended
4. Lecture capture
5. Building quizzes and tests
6. Leading online discussions
7. Using the Moodle Gradebook.

Concurrently, additional informal sessions provided workshop time during which faculty could work on their own courses under the guidance of "floating" staff from the Computer Center and Library; however, most faculty attended the formal sessions instead.

To encourage further reflection on best practices in teaching and learning, the 23 faculty who attended were given a copy of a book focused on increasing student engagement with the aim of helping them develop strategies for engaging students both during the face-to-face weekends and the online weekends. Presentations and support materials were made available in the Moodle Resource Center following the workshop.

Summer 2016. In August 2016, workshops offered by the ID were advertised to PGS faculty only and delivered in two-hour sessions twice a week for four weeks, for a total of eight hours of professional development. They were delivered face-to-face and simultaneously via web-conferencing from noon to 2 PM on four consecutive Mondays and repeated from 6 to 8 PM on Thursday evenings; they were also recorded using a web-conferencing recording feature and made available in the password-protected Moodle Resource Center. The first session included an introduction to blended learning and a discussion of learning objectives and alignment with institutional goals and course components; subsequent sessions focused on specific Moodle tools and how they could be utilized to enhance teaching and learning, as well as accessible course design and copyright compliance. Nine faculty members attended these sessions. Although there was no formal assessment of the workshops, informally participants indicated that it would have been helpful to have time available to practice the skills in their own courses.

Fall 2016. For fall, the workshops were expanded to all faculty and re-envisioned as an hour of presentation followed by an hour of "open lab" where participants could work on any aspect of their own courses. They took

place over ten weeks on consecutive Mondays, noon-2 PM and 5-7 PM, and were billed as “Moodle Monday” to establish a predictable pattern. The series launched during the 2nd week of the semester and continued for ten weeks. The schedule was announced in advance, and a reminder invitation was sent the morning of each Moodle Monday. The topic focusing specifically on “blended courses” was dropped since faculty attending might be teaching face-to-face, blended, or totally online; other topics were added, and the final session was a “Five Minutes of Fame Instructor Showcase” during which faculty members highlighted the use of learning technologies in their own courses. As before, sessions were recorded using a web-conferencing recording tool and were made available online. Twenty faculty members participated, including three who had also attended summer sessions.

While attendance “maxed out” at seven for any session, throughout the semester faculty responded to any of the reminder e-mails when they had problems with Moodle or specific questions about its use. For example, there were many questions about use of the Gradebook towards the end of the semester, and some took the form of a “reply” to a workshop announcement or reminder sent at the beginning of the semester. Thus, advertising the workshop schedule and sending weekly notices provided a way to remind faculty of the support they had available to them, and they took advantage of the support even if they did not attend the workshops.

Spring 2017. In Spring 2017, the fall workshop schedule was repeated, with some updates, and shared in advance with the new topics clearly identified. Six faculty members attended in the spring, four of whom had also attended sessions in the fall.

In addition to the Moodle Monday sessions, another daylong faculty development day was offered on a Saturday in March 2017, with eight formal sessions offered by HC staff and faculty:

1. An overview of the 8-week initiative
2. Library resources
3. Beyond the nuts and bolts of Moodle
4. Best practices and pedagogical concerns
5. Round table discussions during lunch on balancing face-to-face and online time and engaging students in the blended environment
6. Best practices in setting up a Moodle site and utilizing the Workshop tool
7. Best practices using web-conferencing to work with students remotely
8. Universal Design for Learning

PGS faculty who attended were offered a stipend, with half the amount being offered to TC faculty attendees who did not also teach for PGS. A total of 34 attended.

Summer 2017. Several sessions were offered to introduce faculty to a new mobile-responsive Moodle theme, which was implemented college-wide in May and first utilized in seven summer I PGS courses. The new theme is designed to facilitate use on mobile devices and allows greater personalization

of courses, but also includes a number of changes, including resource and activity display and access to admin functions. The sessions were publicized to the HC community, recorded, and made available online.

For Faculty: Online Training Resources

Based upon faculty questions and needs, the Moodle Resource Center was expanded and then re-organized into sections, which currently include:

- **Moodle Instructional Video Library** – videos that demonstrate use of Moodle tools, created by a faculty member who is also a "volunteer" Moodle Mentor.
- **Moodle Moment Task Aid Documents** – documents with text and images that offer step-by-step directions on the use of Moodle tools.
- **Moodle Monday Workshops** – PPTs and video recordings of workshops offered on multiple Moodle topics.
- **PGS 8-week Resources** – documents that focus on teaching and learning in an online environment or blended environment, including presentations made at the PGS Professional Development Days in spring 2016 and 2017 and workshops in using Moodle in a blended environment offered summer 2016. In addition, the site includes a syllabus template focused on PGS courses that includes "boilerplate" information on college and course policies as well as course-related information designed to meet the standards of the Quality Matters 5th edition Higher Education Rubric. (Quality Matters, 2014; Varonis, 2014).
- **Rubric Repository** – sample rubrics on different topics that could be used or modified as documents or converted for direct use within Moodle to facilitate grading.
- **WebEx Resources** – task aids that describe the process of using WebEx in order to web-conference in real time.

The ability to direct faculty to these resources has allowed them to be more independent in their own course design and development. Resources, in particular the Moodle Moment Task Aid documents, are created and/or updated as the need arises.

For Faculty and Students: Personal One-to-One Support

In addition to online resources and workshops, faculty are encouraged to request ID assistance with course design and utilization of learning technologies or with troubleshooting course delivery. A major focus of collaborating on course design is to ensure that learning objectives are the same as those for a face-to-face course, that the course is designed to guide students in achieving those learning objectives, and that students remain engaged and active during the weeks they do not meet face-to-face. Design meetings with faculty take place face-to-face, via web-conferencing, and over-the-phone. Questions related to development and implementation are addressed similarly and via e-mail, typically during work hours but also during the evening or on weekends when time is critical. When necessary, the Director of the Computer Center is consulted to help solve a problem, or a

ticket is opened with the third-party vendor that administers the Moodle courses hosted by HC.

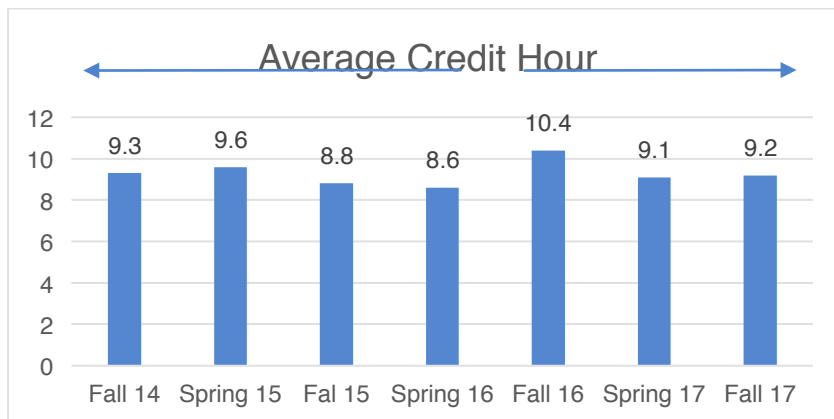
Students can contact the Computer Center Help Desk for personal support and assistance troubleshooting problems. Rarely, if the Help Desk student assistants or staff cannot answer student questions specific to Moodle, the request is escalated to the ID.

Summary of Implementation: Year 1

Impact on Enrollment

The overall goal of this initiative was to increase enrollment with new starts and to better accommodate the scheduling needs of current students. While the data on current students is anecdotal, enrollment tracking over three semesters provides more concrete data. In PGS, the primary enrollment metric is average semester credit hours. Head counts are important, but one student could take three credit hours and another could take 16. It is different from the TC where all students pay for a base of 18 credit hours. Thus, an increase in average semester credit hours year over year in each of the three semesters of the 2016-17 academic year is an early indication of the success of this new calendar. Table 1 shows early gains in semester credit hours in the new delivery format; numbers for Fall 2017 are also included, but are likely to increase by the start of that semester.

*Table 1
Average Credit Hour Enrollment of PGS Students Fall 2014 – Fall 2017*



Impact on Student Satisfaction

Now that we have completed one academic year of this model, we have a better understanding of the operational and pedagogical challenges. It would have been premature to ask students to respond to the new format during the initial rollout. We are still in a phase where the blended format may be new to some instructors or some courses may still be in their first blended offering, but we have enough anecdotal evidence from course evaluation feedback, student and instructor feedback to craft a satisfaction survey to be administered in the 2017-18 academic year. Main topics of this survey will include satisfaction with delivery mode, satisfaction with time to degree completion, feedback on overall course scheduling, and technology support.

Informal Faculty Feedback

Faculty attending the PGS Faculty Development Day in March 2017 were asked to respond anonymously to printed table discussion prompts with others sitting at the same table during lunch, and then to document their responses in writing "so that we may collect and share."

Balancing face-to-face and online time. The first prompt commented on "the balance between face-to-face time and online time in the blended environment" and asked participants to "share with those at your table how you approach the decision about what to do in the classroom and what to do online." Responses suggested that face-to-face time was perceived as very valuable, and therefore faculty put significant thought into implementing a schedule that could optimize use of this time. In other words, rather than approaching blended teaching as an opportunity for learners to access and interact with course materials 24/7, as frequently as needed, they seem to perceive time outside of the course as "second best," and best utilized for activities for which face-to-face time is not required. Several themes emerged from the prompt, in particular, faculty preferences for enhancing interaction. To comment upon these preferences, we utilize the framework of Moore (1989, p.1), who distinguishes among three types of interaction in distance education: learner-content, learner-learner, and learner-instructor.

Learner-content Interaction. With respect to *learner-content* interaction, faculty indicated a preference in the face-to-face weeks for what one faculty member described as "what must be done in person," namely, "harder material," "tangible in-class activities that emphasize application of assessments," and labs. In contrast, learner-content interaction in the "online" weeks focused on what the same faculty member described as "what can be done online": access to course resources like videos, case studies, and other instructional materials; and individual work, including writing, submitting drafts and papers, and taking quizzes and tests. As another respondent commented, "Why waste valuable face-to-face time?" The difference in phrasing between "what must be done" and "what can be done" highlights an apparent difference in how faculty value face-to-face and online delivery.

Learner-learner Interaction. Faculty similarly distinguished between face-to-face and online environments for *learner-learner* interaction. They specified utilizing face-to-face time for interactive activities such as debates, group work, peer workshopping of each other's individual papers, and presentations. One faculty member commented that the greater the number of learners that were involved in an activity, the more likely it would take face-to-face. Another summarized the idea that learner-learner interaction was more successful in the face-to-face environment by suggesting "Take maximum advantage of relationship development in person." With respect to learner-learner interaction in the online environment, one faculty member expressed concern on how to facilitate discussions online, while another noted two technology tools introduced during the morning session that could help increase interaction.

Learner-Instructor Interaction. Somewhat surprisingly, faculty commented less upon differences in learner-instructor interaction in the two environments, although comments that touched on face-to-face learner-content interaction probably assumed a high degree of learner-instructor interaction as well. One mentioned the strategy of “Initiating activities in the classroom that learners can complete online.” Another announced providing more reminders in the online environment: “[I] have started adding a 'You should be working on' and 'You should be reading' notes in addition to the due dates. It's a small thing, but I think it helps students to remember the online week in not an 'off' week." Finally, a faculty member reflected on future technology use to enhance learner-instructor communication: “I am hoping to Skype individually with students for perhaps an hour in order to explain concepts in greater depth. This would be optional of course.”

Successful technology and delivery implementation. A final theme that emerged was reflection on ways to ensure that learners could be successful in the blended environment. One faculty member suggested ensuring learner readiness by testing for “technology familiarity and access.” Another indicated a preference for changing the first-week-face-to-face schedule used by all PGS blended courses so that the last week could be face-to-face instead: “Maybe make first week an off week, online, prepare.”

Strategies to engage students. The second prompt focused on strategies to engage students regardless of delivery mode, asking in particular that respondents “share successful examples of how you have been able to engage students in your classes or talk through challenges where colleagues may be able to help.” Again, several themes clearly emerged.

Engaging students through instructional materials. Faculty commented upon resources they had been introduced to that morning, including utilizing subscription services for educational multimedia that HC had acquired as well as utilizing free services for educational multimedia. In addition, one faculty member supported utilizing original case studies, which “make students more involved.”

Engaging students through collaborative activities. Faculty distinguished between face-to-face and online environments in suggesting collaborative activities that could help engage students.

For the face-to-face environment, they promoted activities such as:

- Forming groups for initial in-class work on an assignment, which could then be completed individually or in groups outside of class.
- Requiring student presentations to class.
- Deliberately finding ways to “to engage different parts of their brain” by including hands-on activities like taking cut-up sentences of a well-written essay and forming them into a coherent paragraph.

For the online environment, there were fewer suggestions. We infer from this that faculty are still adjusting to teaching in a blended environment and still in

need of support. One faculty member promoted using discussion forums that include specific assignments with specific deadlines for posting. Another commented “I’m finding it difficult to keep them engaged online. It’s hard to keep a conversation going or lead them to new ideas.”

A few suggestions could be directed to both face-to-face and online discussions, e.g., “Clarify what constitutes meaningful feedback and civil discussion,” and requiring discussions that go “Beyond ‘I agree’” so that learners “contribute meaningful/representative example.”

Engaging students through deliberate teaching and delivery strategies and software tools. Several faculty members commented upon utilizing pedagogical strategies and technologies to engage students, involving both faculty and student technology use. Suggestions included: “Find their learning style and use teaching and delivery strategies that suit them”; “Use of apps for real-time games to reinforce course content attainment”; and use of apps for faculty or student creation of multimedia.

Engaging students by reinforcing the goals of a liberal arts education and creating a culture of accountability. Finally, faculty took the open-ended question as an opportunity to comment, sometimes with frustration, upon lack of student awareness of the goals of a liberal arts education and the need to make students accountable. This seemed to be less focused on the delivery format, but perhaps the blended environment made faculty more aware of student challenges in taking responsibility for their education. Several suggested that students be reminded of the goals of liberal arts education, and the goals of Hiram College in particular, with one noting that community college students “do not necessarily embrace the goals.” Another stressed that faculty should “create a culture of accountability” and that students should take “responsibility for their education”; this might be enhanced by asking them “What would you like from this class?” Another commented about the difficulty of “getting students to read,” and even the need to “Teach them how to read.” One offered a strategy that might help in the blended environment: “Get students to work throughout the weeks, e.g., by scheduling an assignment due soon after an in-person class.” And another commented that it is “Harder to lead the horse to water” in this format, in comparison to the traditional Hiram environment where profs may often have more access/power to cajole students to give great efforts. What is the key to inspiring?”

Next Steps and New Innovations

As the first year of implementation draws to a close, we can take this time to reflect on the successes and challenges of this new delivery mode. In terms of successes, average semester credit hours are increasing in the new format. We are still enrolling for fall 2017 so we expect that total to increase. Overall, anecdotal feedback from faculty and students has been positive. Students appreciate continuing the alternate weekend format and are beginning to see how this schedule will help them speed their path to degree completion. Faculty continue to embrace the functions of the learning management system and work to improve their courses. Some very specific items are surfacing as areas where faculty need assistance. These concerns, such as ensuring

copyright compliance for multimedia formerly delivered face-to-face, and addressing accessibility in course documents made available online, will help to set the professional development agenda for the next year. Another success includes the emergence of a “community” of faculty users who can share experiences in technology integration. In the coming year, we will complete a formal survey to collect data on student satisfaction to add to the semester credit hour data as another evaluation metric.

Hiram College is continuing its spirit of innovation by introducing Tech and Trek, a 1:1 iPad initiative in the traditional college for the 2017-18 academic year. In the first phase of this project, students, TC faculty, and staff are given iPad Pro devices along with significant professional development to use the devices in the classroom and across campus to improve student learning and engagement as well as improve operations in various facets of the college. PGS is slated to be included in the second phase of this program. We are looking forward to utilizing iPads to enhance the blended delivery model, giving all users a common device and platform, common apps, and reliable mobile-friendly access to the learning management system. We also look forward to documenting the success of this approach. According to the 2017 Horizon report, “Online, mobile, and blended learning are foregone conclusions. If institutions do not already have robust strategies for integrating these now pervasive approaches, then they simply will not survive. An important step is tracking how these models are actively enriching learning outcomes.” (Adams Becker, et al., 2017, p. 2). As Hiram College moves forward as an increasingly digital campus combining the blended format in PGS with mobile technology keeps the College viable now and into the future.

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