6-1-2014

Teaching in Times of Changing Administrations and Stringent Budgets

Kimberly Gill
gill_kimberly@columbusstate.edu

David Kerr
kerr_david@columbusstate.edu

Kyle Christensen
christensen_kyle@columbusstate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/pil

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Online and Distance Education Commons, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons, and the Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons

Teaching in Times of Changing Administrations and Stringent Budgets

Kimberly Gill
Columbus State University

David Kerr
Columbus State University

Kyle Christensen
Columbus State University

Abstract

This paper explores the organizational and administrative changes occurring at Columbus State University as a result of changes in the University System of Georgia occurring from a progression and degree completion emphasis. Developments in this paper focus on changes at the departmental level to promote and enhance student learning in the context of reduced financial support. These efforts include the use of mentoring, peer tutoring, and improved pedagogical techniques in the online and traditional in-class settings for both undergraduate and graduate education. The goal of this paper is to highlight best practices and lessons learned for other institutions facing similar challenges. The changing nature of higher education across the country is something that departments and institutions must adapt in order to remain relevant. The materials outlined in this article represent initial efforts of the Columbus State University Department of Political Science and Public Administration to address many of the changes being implemented in the University System of Georgia. These trends highlight best practices while using technology and learning experiences to maximize faculty productivity as they meet increasing challenges related to student success and a changing institutional mission.

This paper explores the organizational and administrative changes occurring at Columbus State University as a result of changes in the University System of Georgia occurring from a progression and degree completion emphasis. Developments in this paper focus on changes at the departmental level to promote and enhance student learning in the context of increasing class sizes, heavier course loads, and reduced institutional support. These efforts include the use of mentoring, peer tutoring, and improved pedagogical techniques in the online and traditional in-class settings for both undergraduate and graduate education. The goal of this paper is to highlight best practices and lessons learned for other institutions facing similar challenges.

With the incorporation and implementation of Georgia's Higher Education Completion Plan, special attention is given to the areas of progression and completion. Georgia's Higher Education Completion Plan, a joint effort between the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and the University System of Georgia (USG), is designed to provide a framework for action and accountability that leads to increased college completion rates. By 2020, it is estimated that over 60% of jobs in Georgia will require some form of college education- either a certificate, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree. Currently in Georgia, only 42% of the state's young adults (ages 25-34) have such credentials (University System of Georgia, 2013). Several components comprise the framework for increasing access and timely degree completion. Of significance in this study are those of developing new models of instruction and learning for students and identifying areas/methods to assist students with progression and completion while maintaining academic standards coupled and operating within budgetary constraints.

Doing more with less seems to be a theme that has been sung for many years, but it appears to have taken on new emphasis the last few years. Even though the financial pain has been felt by everyone, there has been an increasing call to ensure that college tuition is kept at a minimum, or at least ensure accountability for any increase passed on to students or taxpayers. The call from legislatures has gone all the way to the White House as President Obama brought notice to higher education tuitions in his January 2012 State of the Union address by specifically stating he was "placing universities on notice" (Obama, 2012). He emphatically indicated that taxpayer funding will decrease if tuition cannot be controlled. Some of the recommendations of redesigning courses and using technology will require addressing old problems in a new way (Anders, 1999). The "new" thinking may be due to the need to control cost (Anders, 1999) as rising cost at an average of 8% each year (Ferolito, 2009) is having a negative impact on students attending college, especially those individuals having low socio-economic status. However, no one involved in education believes that controlling the cost of education should be allowed to diminish the quality of the education provided. President Obama's comments seem to be simply echoing sentiments felt by a growing number of students, parents (helping children pay for college), and taxpayers, as the cost of repaying college debts increases as public financing for higher education decreases (Kirschner, 2012). With so much emphasis on the reduction of revenues and the need to cover this difference, university presidents place a great deal of effort in raising additional resources (Kirschner, 2012). Regardless of the funding source, universities are being held more accountable on the uses of these monies than ever before (Kirschner, 2012). This increased scrutiny reflects a need for greater emphasis on how universities recruit, retain, and prepare students.

The issue has to be the developing of a curriculum that is challenging, while obtainable, and one that actually prepares a student for the 'real world', but also recognizes the pressing issue of the number of students who fail to graduate that ultimately impacts the retention rate (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003).

Developing a quality program that is sufficiently challenging to the students, even in the best of economic times, may influence university staff in determining how to fund each request. This becomes an ever increasing difficult task when faced with the 40% budget reductions within the last three

years from the Board of Regents and the State of Georgia (Columbus State University Fact Book, 2013). Certain initiatives taken by the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of Columbus State University such as student mentoring, tutoring, and experiential learning opportunities all represent educational platforms to increase the effectiveness of student learning while maintaining a quality curriculum in an increasingly restrictive budgetary environment. These best practices may prove beneficial to other programs facing similar constraints.

The backdrop for the changes by the Columbus State University Political Science undergraduate and Masters of Public Administration programs are from multiple dimensions: The University inaugurated only its fourth president in its 50 year history in 2008 and with the new president came a new interest in raising the level of accreditation of the various departments, as well as a push for increased enrollment, while providing an academic excellence that involves student engagement not only through face-to-face class experience but online courses as well. In addition to providing quality education, it is also understood that to accomplish these goals, there would be a need for improved retention, progression and graduation rates (Columbus State University Strategic Plan, 2013). The desire for increased enrollment takes into consideration that Columbus State University, as with numerous other higher education institutions, is competing for students from other schools. The Columbus, Georgia area has several regionally accredited schools that are just as interested in attracting these same students. Also, taking into consideration the availability of online education which has grown by 236% at the same time traditional colleges have only grown at 25% (Kirschner, 2012), the availability of educational options for

students in and out of the Columbus, Georgia area are plentiful. Educational institutions, including Columbus State University, are recognizing that failure to focus on students' needs is a recipe for "institutional suicide" (Kirschner, 2012). Therefore, finding innovative techniques to assist with retention and progression is a central task. Meeting the needs of the students, through diversifying teaching methods and incorporating the use of mentoring and tutoring, is a key step the Department of Political Science and Public Administration is taking to fulfill the mission of Complete College Georgia, which is "to produce an estimated 250,000 graduates in the upcoming years" (University System of Georgia, 2013).

Student Learning
No conversation about effective teaching could be complete without discussing how students learn (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010). Columbus State University fully embraces the concept of student learning as evident in its strategic plan by stating its mission to ensure that not only is there excellence in teaching but the learning would also be accomplished with engagement, creativity and leadership through empowerment and services (Columbus State University Strategic Plan, 2013).

Through strategic planning commission meetings, Columbus State University realized that maximizing student engagement would require the use of best practices. This includes the expansion of its technology platform and a renewed effort for faculty development in order to effectively implement cutting-edge technology (Columbus State University Strategic Plan, 2013). The Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Columbus State University recognized the importance of ensuring the students are the

ones who must accomplish the task of learning (Ambrose, et al., 2010), but the department could ensure support from the many facets provided for the learning process. Taking into consideration that motivation assists a student in learning (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Lijun, 2011), the Department of Political Science and Public Administration developed programming that motivated each student based on what best worked for him or her. By doing so, it is the goal of the department to discover techniques and best practices which can assist students with degree completion.

Interactive Lectures

Even though the delivery system most often used in education, including higher education, is the lecture method (Hrastinski & Aghaee, 2012), this method may have a basic misconception that students only learn from this mode of teaching (Knight & Wood, 2005). Realizing that not all students learn in the same manner, it becomes easier to understand that the teaching strategy plays a key role in supporting students (Hrastinski & Aghaee, 2012). Building relationships of learning by providing lectures that are augmented with student interaction will in the long run promote improved retention, progression and graduation rate, benefiting the school and student simultaneously. Columbus State University has not been alone in the search for effective teaching techniques as this search has a long history in education (Romero-Zaldivar, Pardo, Burgos & Kloos, 2011), but it is this search that guides its leaders to recognize that to achieve academic excellence, there has to be a creative inquiry and student engagement (Columbus State University Strategic Plan, 2013) that will allow the acquisition of knowledge and not just the receiving of information (Gol, 2011). Even though the lecture is the dominant pedagogical model,

it has serious weaknesses as the delivery of a monologue of information from professor to students is at best, uninspiring (Gol, 2011). Pedagogically speaking, adult learners need more involvement than just listening and generally want to be involved in the learning process by participating (Ebert-May, Brewer, & Allred, 1997). The students that become actively engaged in the learning process enjoy having their name called by the instructor (Ebert-May et al., 1997), increasing faculty/student relationships (Sachar, 1959; Hrastinski & Aghaee, 2012), friendly, nonthreatening, fun, and dynamic atmosphere, sense of identity to the class and material and feedback that comes from interacting (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Ebert-May, et al., 1997; Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002).

More emphasis is being placed on recognizing that even a lecture class can be enhanced by the use of interactions, such as group discussions and case studies (Knight & Wood, 2005; Krejci & Lester, 2006) and is actually the preferred method of learning by students (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Ebert-May et al., 1997; Krejci & Lester, 2006). Different learning platforms provide various opportunities for student learning needs that ultimately lead to a better understanding of the material. When different forms of teaching are used in any class, the lectures can reinforce the learning received by the other methods as the instructor becomes a facilitator of student engagement and learning. For the Masters of Public Administration program, efforts have been made on behalf of the faculty to include more diverse teaching styles focusing on learner centric models of instruction and peer collaboration.

Another benefit in implementing various modes of instruction is that, as with most schools, Columbus State University has a variation of age, gender, race and ethnic origins that may not only benefit

individually from the different modes but the students may be able to learn from each other (Krejci & Lester, 2006; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Not only is there a greater level of understanding of the material being taught (Smith et al., 2009), but a student's confidence almost always increases in that even if the student answers a question incorrectly, this student still learns from a combination of teacher and other student involvement (Smith et al., 2009). However, as much as teachers want to believe they are the best source of information for students, it may actually be another students' explanation that allows the student who provided an incorrect response to understand his or her misconception (Smith et al., 2009). It is this interaction in the classroom that provides the significant learning experience that is crucial for the long-term retention of course material (Romero-Zaldivar et al., 2011).

Even though active engagement may benefit a course, it does not mean that it will be met with enthusiasm as "new" or "different" modes of teaching may place the instructor and student out of their comfort zones (Knight & Wood, 2005). Instructors often adjust their delivery to meet the needs, prior knowledge, and skills of their students (McArthur, Stasz, & Zmuidzinas, 1990). Teachers may challenge students to explore learning in new ways, however special notice may need to be placed on the possibility that some students may provide lower course evaluations due to the unfamiliar techniques (Knight & Wood, 2005). These students who are accustomed to having all information provided by the instructor may not see the long term benefits of learning information in different ways. Some students may not like the interaction in the beginning and may even comment on it being a distraction to their learning style, but many thereafter offer glowing comments about the perception of caring by the instructor (Knight & Wood, 2005). Realizing the balance of positive comments usually surpass initial criticism, administrators promoting involved teaching will usually reap the rewards of increased retention in their programs (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Upon deciding an instructor's evaluation, one must consider the quality of critical issues discussed and not be as concerned with some reduction in material taught, if the removal of extraneous material offers additional opportunities for involved learning (Knight & Wood, 2005). Another dilemma to be considered when implementing active learning in a classroom is some students may be reluctant to engage and simply not participate (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Ebert-May, et al., 1997) or participate minimally, leaving the majority of the work performed by only a few in a group setting thereby not providing the uninvolved student with a full understanding of the material (Knight & Wood, 2005). Providing students with a non-threatening environment, such as being able to 'opt-out' of answering a question, will benefit in encouraging involvement without the concern of embarrassment in the presence of other students (Ebert-May, et al., 1997). Recognizing students should do more than listen (Bonwell & Eison, 1991) and wishing to improve the student and faculty relationships for deeper learning (Hrastinski & Aghaee, 2011), the Department of Political Science and Public Administration requested that instructors attempt to find as many different modes of instruction as possible for each class taught. As it is recognized that long-term retention is increased with more involvement with faculty and other students (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Smith, et al., 2009; El-Ghalayini & El-Khalili, 2011), emphasis is placed on upgrading class lectures to include as much of the other modes of learning as possible, such as group or peer discussions.

In addition to more interaction in the classroom, Columbus State University recognized through its Strategic Plan that student engagement could, and should, extend beyond the classroom with internships, mentoring programs and additional web-based offerings.

Internships

Another form of engaging students to gain a deeper understanding of course material as well as to understand 'real world' application of material is through the long-standing and recognized worthwhile use of internships (McKenzie & Nelms, 2006). Used properly, an internship provides students with opportunities to build upon a work history that is usually short while at the same time allowing students to bring knowledge back to the classroom (McKenzie & Nelms, 2006). Even though the information taught in the classroom is necessary to build a firm foundation of knowledge, students may not always be able to make a connection between knowledge and application. The use of the additional instruction received by an intern from someone in the community helps to shrink this gap. As with any form of education, internships should be structured with a specific number of hours to allow full integration with the job while being closely monitored by faculty through the use of weekly journals, meetings, and papers explaining how the information learned would be applied in similar situations. In addition to receiving instructions that are not always available in the classroom, another benefit is the continuing networking that is developed (McKenzie & Nelms, 2006). These relationships not only provide for potential avenues of employment for graduates, but can also be seen as possible financial donors. With so many opportunities to be seen with the use of internships, schools, such as Columbus State University, are searching for additional ways to utilize this learning / partnering opportunity.

Interactions between professors and students have a wide range of outcomes from improving critical thinking to other things such as the choosing of a major (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999). Improving the quality and diversity of teaching is beneficial to the student learning and assists the departmental mission by increasing its number of students. Other out-of-class experiences that could benefit students could be mentoring and tutoring programs, especially with students of minority groups as involvement with other students offering support will have a great deal of influence on struggling students' outcomes (Whitt et al., 1999).

Mentoring

Institutions of higher education are concerned with a student's academic needs including quality teaching, tutoring, as well as other forms of academic support. A student's emotional needs must also be considered and addressed (Mangold et al., 2003). Addressing a student's emotional needs will raise the possibility of a student completing his or her degree plan which increases a school's retention numbers (Mangold et al., 2003), making this a positive consideration for student and school.

Even though there is an increase in the number of minority students entering higher education, they are graduating at a significantly lower rate than their counterparts (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). This raises significant practical and normative implications for institutions of higher education. It also brings the need for additional student support to the forefront for those who may find it difficult to succeed in college. As with the involvement with faculty in an active learning

environment, students have found interaction with a mentor crucial in their ability to stay focused, thereby maintaining commitment leading to a higher probability of graduation (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007; Mangold et al., 2003). In addition, students attending school for the first time, or those who have been out of school for an extended period, may find themselves feeling, especially in large lecture type classes, alienated leading them to being uninvolved or unresponsive to teaching methods (Mangold et al., 2003). These students could also receive a benefit from a mentoring program.

Implementing a mentoring program is not new and has been successfully accomplished at many schools with the realization that mentoring programs combine social and academic support which increases student persistence. This increased determination provides a foundation for more involvement. Increased student involvement is associated with the rise of a student's grades, again raising the potential of remaining and succeeding in a particular program (Mangold et al., 2003). As with most programs that create a greater involvement between a teacher and pupil, a mentoring program is one in which both can benefit (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2003) as a pupil develops a deeper understanding of the material increasing the potential for graduation while a teacher will have students more actively engaged in the classroom.

Tutoring

As with mentoring, tutoring provides an excellent alternative for learning by the student as both programs have demonstrated that other students as well as teachers who are not necessarily the primary instructor for the course may be the most effective teachers as new explanations might be exactly what is needed for the student to grasp the course information (Mangold et al., 2003). The benefits received from tutoring are easily recognized on the student's behalf as the tutor is able to determine missing skills through small group or one-on-one observations and develop a study plan that is tailored to individual needs (McArthur et al., 1990). It is by this specific and personal interaction, which is sometimes more creative involving different sources than is possible in the classroom, that students grasp the course material which provides a deeper understanding that might not have been possible otherwise (Roscoe, & Chi, 2007; McArthur et al., 1990).

Even though computerized tutoring is beneficial to a student requiring additional assistance, the one-on-one method of tutoring has been regarded as the most beneficial (McArthur et al., 1990) as the personal involvement with a student provides personalized feedback that can allow for collaboration and learning by the tutee as well as the tutor (McArthur et al., 1990). One additional benefit for the tutor in providing a tutoring session is that he or she may be required to commit to additional studying in preparation for the particular lesson. This additional preparation benefits both as the tutee receives the most comprehensive tutoring session while the tutor prepares for his or her own lessons (Roscoe & Chi, 2007).

Tutoring for Columbus State University undergraduate students has been a departmental initiative supported for over two years. This programming is implemented using Columbus State University's Academic Success Center and focuses largely on Introductory American Government courses. Tutoring takes place in a peer-to-peer environment in which students are encouraged to seek clarification, get assistance with study habits, or prepare class specific writing assignments. Tutoring

does provide a low cost method of academic support which produces small, but significant outcomes.

Despite the benefits of tutoring, a limited number of students actually participate in the process. Of 1,775 students enrolled in American Government courses between Fall 2010 and Spring 2012, only 96 students or 5.4% actually participated in tutoring activities. This makes tutoring a rare event. Students who attended tutoring did spend an average of 4.5 hours with a tutor over the course of a semester. Initial results indicate that there is a weak but positive association between tutoring and student performance. The lack of strong support for tutoring may also be a function of differential support or recruitment among faculty. Figure 1 indicates that raw numbers of students attending peer-to-peer tutoring, for academic year 2011-2012, as reported by the Academic Success Center vary markedly. In addition, tutoring is limited by a focus on traditional, resident students who do not have similar time constraints associated with non-traditional or commuting students. Future efforts to expand and improve undergraduate tutoring are currently being investigated.

For the Master's Program in Public Administration at Columbus State University, the incorporation of a capstone class has and continues to prove to be beneficial. It is a course designed to cover all of the core classes where each core class has an assigned case study and students must apply theory to "real life" scenarios. While not a traditional form of tutoring, it does allow the instructor to identify areas of weakness as it pertains to each core class and the students' knowledge, skills, and abilities. The instructor can devote special attention to areas of deficiency based on each case study and tailor the instruction method to each individual based on need,

which better prepares him or her for the comprehensive final examination.

Web-Based

Although web-based learning has been around for many years (Kirschner, 2012), the spread of the digital age has developed at a pace that few would have realized even a short time ago (Gol, 2011), providing more opportunities to engage students than ever before. Increased computer usage has allowed a development of skills that no longer require students to attend class in a physical location (Santos & Ali, 2011) as students can exchange information quickly with teachers and other students on a global scale (Gol, 2011). This ease of information retrieval can be considered a "double-edge sword" as students are able to search numerous locations for information that would be beneficial to their studies, but they may need assistance in developing the necessary skills to effectively cope with the large volume of information from so many sources (Gol, 2011) which could cause a cognitive overload (Hu, Zhang, Dai, & Zhang, 2011). Falsely assuming students have a grasp of being able to search scholarly information and then synthesize this information into original work may lead to disappointment, at least on the student's part.

The rapid growth in online instruction has necessitated a focus on student support offerings for this new learning environment (Hu et al., 2011). Colleges and universities are realizing that this mode is one of the new growth sectors in higher education. This trend is expected to increase as each generation becomes more familiar with computers and the Internet and as their expectations rise for more computer-based options (Gol, 2011).

Schools have recognized the benefits of students (or faculty) not being restricted by time or place (Hrastinski & Aghaee, 2011),

while still providing modes of interaction such as chat, texting, discussion boards, and videos (Epper & Bates, 2001). Online education still provides numerous platforms of learning that will not only appeal to different students but provide multiple opportunities for student engagement. The key concern is determining the most appropriate applications that provide genuine and meaningful interaction (Epper & Bates, 2001).

Students engaging in online courses can potentially be from other cities, states, or even other countries allowing engagement in discussions with students of multiple backgrounds and diversity. These expanding geographical cultural boundaries offer students opportunities to interact with others students that would normally only be available to students who study abroad (Seddon, Postlehwaite, James, & Mulryne, 2011).

There are a wide range of benefits associated with using online technologies to augment learning. These include increased student enrollment and retention, removal of the limitations of a physical class environment, and allowing students the ability to interact who may be reluctant to do so in a classroom environment (Seddon et al., 2011). Even though there is a concern by some about the academic rigor (Kirschner, 2012) as e-learning does not necessarily guarantee improved learning (El-Ghalayini & El-Khalili, 2011), a portion of this concern can at least be partially abated by ensuring students post a full understanding of their knowledge about the information being discussed for each assignment (Knight & Wood, 2005). Using the discussion board approach to enhance a classroom course could be beneficial as students who are reluctant to talk in class will be required to engage in a 'discussion' that is brought back into the classroom. Through these thorough postings by each

student on a regular basis, decided upon by the instructor, student deficiencies are able to be identified and potentially resolved (Knight & Wood, 2005), especially when the instructor is an active participant who promotes supporting the student as is normally expressed in a classroom environment (Seddon et al., 2011). This 'forced' involvement of students brings the learning out of a listening, passive learning style and provides a richer understanding of the material.

Developing a first-rate online course is time consuming (Kirschner, 2012) especially if an instructor has received little or no training in preparing these types of courses (Walczyk, Ramsey, & Zha, 2007). The developing may not be any more time consuming with the proper instruction and support, especially if the course is being developed for the first time (Knight & Wood, 2005). The key to successful development of any program, including online courses, is the training and support provided to the developer, which may the instructor. In an effort to ensure faculty are provided with the proper professional development, Columbus State University not only provides knowledgeable IT and online support, but is working to ensure every online instructor is completing developmental courses such as 'Quality Matters'. With the proper support, an instructor can find teaching online to be rewarding to himself or herself as well as the student.

Utilizing the web-based format can also assist students in other ways to help ensure successful degree completion. The Masters of Public Administration program uses online format for student orientation as well as a tool for advising and posting current department policies. Additionally, this format is extremely useful in terms of providing students with additional resources such as linking classes with expected

learning outcomes, offering external writing assistance resources, links to peer reviewed journals, and other related materials. All of these added resources provide students with the tools needed to assist with their degree completion.

Conclusions

The changing nature of higher education across the country is something that departments and institutions must adapt to in order to remain relevant. The materials outlined in this article represent initial efforts of the Columbus State University Department of Political Science and Public Administration to address many of the changes being implemented in the University System of Georgia. These highlighted practices utilize technology and learning experiences to maximize faculty productivity as they meet increasing challenges related to student success in a changing institutional mission made more difficult in a stringent economic environment.

References

Ambrose, S., Bridges, M., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M., & Norman, M. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons: San Francisco, CA.

Anders, J. (1999). Doing more with less. *American Journal of Nursing*, 99(9), 24-26.

Bonwell, C., & Eison, J. (1991). Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education*.

Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. (1987, March). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *American Association of Higher Education Bulletin*, 2-6.

Columbus State University (2013). Fact page – *Education and general expenses by revenue sources*. Retrieved from http://ir.columbusstate.edu/fact_book/2010-2011/financial_info/Ed_and_Gen_Expenses_Source.xml

Columbus State University (2013). *Strategic planning commission*. Retrieved from http://www.columbusstate.edu/aboutus/strategic_plan.php

Ebert-May, D., Brewer, C., & Allred, S. (1997). Innovations in large lectures: Teaching for active learning. *American Institute of Biological Sciences*. 47(9), 601-607.

El-Ghalayini, H., & El-Khalili, N. (2011, July). An approach to designing and evaluating blended courses. *Education Information Technology*. 17, 417-430.

Epper, R., & Bates, A. (2001). *Teaching faculty how to use technology: Best practices for leading institutions*. Westport, CT, Oryx Press.

Ferolito, P. (2009, December). College for your kids. *Yakima Herald-Republic*, p. B1.

Gol, A. (2011). Constructing knowledge: An effective use of educational technology for teaching Islamic studies in the UK. *Education Information Technology*, 17, 399-416.

Hrastinski, S., & Aghaee, N. (2012). How are campus students using social media to support their studies? An explorative interview study. *Education Information Technology*. 17, 451-464.

Hu, T., Zhang, X., Dai, H., & Zhang, P. (2011). An examination of gender differences among college students in their usage the perceptions of the

Internet. *Education and Information Technologies* 17(3), 315-330.

Kirschner, A. (2012, April). Innovations in higher education? Hah!: College leaders need to move beyond talking about transformation before it's too late. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.*

Knight, J., & Wood, W. (2005). Teaching more by lecturing less. *Cell Biology Education*, 4(4), 298-310.

Krejci, D., & Lester, W. (2006). Incorporating ethnic and cross-cultural diversity in university teaching. *Reaching Through Teaching*. 18(1), 9-19.

Lijun, Y. (2011). The investigation of learning motivation and strategy in the normal undergraduates. *Canadian Academy of Oriental and Occidental Culture*, 7(3), 126-131.

Mangold, W., Bean, L., Adams, D., Schwab, W., & Synch, S., (2003). Who goes, who stays: An assessment of the effect of a freshman mentoring and unit registration program on college persistence. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 4(2), 95-122.

McArthur, D., Stasz, C., & Zmuidzinas, M. (1990). Tutoring techniques in algebra. *Cognition and Instructions*. 7(3), 197-244.

McKenzie, C., & Nelms, L. (2006). Leveraging the internship: Integrating theory with experience. *Reaching Through Teaching*. 18(1), 39-47.

Obama, B. (2012). *Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address*. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. Washington, DC.

Romero-Zaldivar, V., Pardo, A., Burgos, D., & Kloos, C. (2011, May). Monitoring student progress using virtual appliances: A case study.

Computers & Education, 58(4). 1058-1067.

Roscoe, R., & Chi, M. (2007, December). Understanding tutor learning: Knowledge-building-telling in peer tutors' explanations and questions. *Review of Educational Research,* 77(4). 534-574.

Sachar, L. (1959). Education and the game of numbers. *The Journal of Higher Education* 30(8), 423-426.

Santos, I., & Ali, N. (2011, March). Exploring the uses of mobile phones to support informal learning. *Education and Information Technologies*, 17(2), 187-203.

Seddon, K., Postlethwaite, K., James, M., & Mulryne, K. (2011, June). Towards an understanding of the learning processes that occur in synchronous online seminars for the professional development of experienced educators. *Education and Information Technologies*, 431-449.

Smith, M., Wood, W., Adams, W., Wieman, C., Knight, J., Guild, N., & Su, T. (2009). Why peer discussion improves student performance on in-class concepts questions. *Science*. 333, 122-124.

Strayhorn, T., & Terrell, M. (2007, Spring/Summer). Mentoring and satisfaction with college for Black students. *Negro Education Review*. 58, 69-83.

University System of Georgia (2013, December 9). *Educational access and success: Complete college Georgia*. Retrieved from http://www.usg.edu/educational_acc ess/complete_college_georgia

Walczyk, J., Ramsey, L., & Zha, P. (2007). Obstacles to instructional innovation according to College science and mathematics faculty. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 44(1), 85-106.

Whitt, E., Edison, M., Pascarella, E., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. (1999). Interactions with peers and objective and self-reported cognitive outcomes across 3 years of college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(1), 61-78.

Zhao, Y., Pugh, K., Sheldon, S., & Byers, J. (2002). Conditions for classroom technology innovations. *Teachers College Record*, 104(3), 482-515.

Dr. Kimberly Gill is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, the Director of the Public Administration (PA) Program, the Director of the PA Government Administration and the Justice Systems Administration tracks at Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia

Dr. David Kerr is an instructor with the Masters of Public Administration (MPA) program with Columbus State University.

Dr. Kyle Christensen is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Director of the Social Research Center at Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia.