Using a Hybrid Instructional Model in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: Hybrid courses allow for in-person learning communities combined with the convenience and reflective nature of online learning. This roundtable will provide an opportunity to share educators' experiences and techniques in implementing the hybrid model to facilitate student learning.

Evolution of Instruction

Is there a best instructional delivery method? Despite Russell's (1999) extensive research findings that there is no significant difference between face-to-face and online instruction, this debate continues throughout academia. It is no secret that while many educators in higher education have embraced computer-mediated instruction, others still prefer traditional, face-to-face methods. According to Skill and Young (2002), "While many critics' reactions to technology and e-learning may be driven by either discomfort with change or philosophical opposition to distributed (distance) learning models, past patterns suggest that the likely future will be neither solely online learning nor solely instructor-led classroom learning" (p. 24).

The evolution of online instruction and the continuous search to incorporate the best educational methods from both traditional and virtual environments has led to many institutions adopting a "hybrid," also known as blended learning (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004). Hybrid, in the context of instruction, is a course where a teacher reduces in-person classroom meetings and replaces a significant amount of that instructional time with online learning activities through a course management tool (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002; Swenson & Evans, 2003). There are many variations of hybrid courses to accommodate the teacher's instructional style, course content, course size, and course goals. In 2002, the editor of the *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* (2002) predicted that 80 to 90% of all courses would eventually become part online and part face-to-face (cited in Young, 2002). Bonk, Kim, & Zeng (2006) point out that "blended learning is proliferating across college and university campuses, and this trend will increase" (p. 553). It is important to ask, why are so many institutions and faculty members adopting the blended or hybrid instructional model?

Hybrid Offers Many Benefits

Literature has cited numerous benefits to using the hybrid instructional model. Reduced seat time is a benefit to institutions, faculty, and students because more students have access to education, while allowing for more scheduling flexibility (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004). Dziuban, Hartman, and Moskal (2004) found that 88% of faculty members were satisfied with their blended courses, citing convenience and "increased instructional quality" (p. 7).

Also, hybrid courses allow for flexibility and choice in pedagogical strategies that work best in face-to-face and online environments. For example, the face-to-face environment allows for more spontaneity and immediate feedback, while online allows for more reflection, critical thinking, recollection, and conceptualization. Hybrid courses offer the benefits of both in-person and online instruction. In general, the hybrid environment has been found to have the "potential

to increase student learning outcomes" over online instruction and have comparable success to face-to-face courses (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004, p. 6). Because of these benefits, the hybrid instructional model has affected the way learners learn and the way teachers teach.

Roundtable Focus: Unique Challenges and Opportunities of Hybrid

The blending of these two environments creates unique challenges for faculty who are charged with developing and delivering meaningful learning activities to create an integrated course that facilitates students' learning. Bonk, Kim, and Zeng (2006) note, "Blended learning highlights the need for instructional skills in multiple teaching and learning environments" (p. 564). In a hybrid course, instructor roles change week to week as they traverse the in-person and online environments. In the classroom, they may still lecture or lead group discussions and the next day facilitate online discussions, activities and assessments or solve technology issues (Swenson & Evans, 2003).

This roundtable will explore how postsecondary instructors use the hybrid instructional model to teach and promote student learning. Discussion will include:

1. Why faculty choose to use the hybrid model;
2. How faculty can use the hybrid model to improve their instruction;
3. What are the unique challenges and opportunities of the hybrid model;
4. What instructors need to know to effectively teach using the hybrid model; and
5. How faculty can connect the face-to-face and online environments to promote learning.

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