A Collaborative Approach to Blended Learning Design and Activities to Engage Students: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Wireless technology enables user connectedness anytime and anywhere. Adoption of technology for pedagogy at higher education institutions is now the norm to achieve efficiency, convenience, and cost-savings for students, faculty, and the institution overall in order to gain a competitive edge in higher education. Especially, faculty have felt pressure to utilize relevant and up to date technology "as competition from online providers, MOOCs, and international institutions increases" (Loes, 2018). Based on a study conducted by the Center for Digital Education (2012), ninety percent of the participating institutions stated that they were encouraging instructors to pursue blended learning while eighty-eight percent stated they were not offering courses taught through a blended learning model (TeachThought Staff, 2018). On the student side, a 2017 Digital Study Trends Survey of 1,000 college students indicated that 60% believed digital learning technology improved their grades, and over 61% agreed that digital technology was extremely or very helpful in preparing for exams (McGrawHill HigherEd).

The first implementation of blended learning in a course goes back to the 1840s when Sir Isaac Pitman offered a distance course utilizing mailed materials to students and receiving them back for grading and providing feedback. In the 1960s and 1970s, main-frame computers replaced mail to deliver materials to users, and in the 1970s and 1980s, blended learning technology moved forward with TV-based technology through which professors could deliver lectures to multiple locations via the satellite TV network. The next decade was the introduction of CD-ROM and the first version of Learning Management System (LMS) technology, followed by the first generation of web-based instruction. The start of the Internet enabled uploads of e-learning materials with video, graphics and sounds as well as assignments and assessments (Pappas, 2015). Beginning in the 2000s, progressive advancements in LMS and video-conferencing technologies enabled instructors to design blended courses to deliver, record, and upload online lecture webinars, hold online office hours, access interactive simulation cases, embed an online librarian, and use knowledge assessment tools including synchronous and/or asynchronous participation in discussion forums, assignments, quizzes and exams.

Technological advancement in ability to combine face-to-face and online learning experiences has also led to updates in the definition of blended learning. Blended learning in general terms is defined as "a style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching" (Dictionary.com). More specifically, it is "an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some elements of student control over time, place, path, or pace" (Staker and Horn,

2012).

A blended course is typically designed to allow students to interact with: 1) the course material, 2) instructor, and 3) other students. In order to implement a successful blended learning strategy, one first need to learn about its key ideas and values (Pappas, 2015). One of the key ideas for success in a blended course is that it requires flexibility and ultimately student control over time, path, and pace as Staker and Horn (2012) stated.

This paper presents a pedagogical method that demonstrates a blended course design for a Principles of Marketing course utilizing Canvas as the LMS. It lays out the challenges and metrics to assess student success. It offers guidance to instructors on assignments, activities, embedding a librarian, and technology tools that help increase student engagement, success, enjoyment, and satisfaction.

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Academic Librarians, Researchers and Practitioners:

This paper aims to provide guidance to faculty who like to successfully incorporate the blended course design into curriculum using technology and some of the best practices to engage students in learning the course material and building crucial skills. In a case study, the authors provide details of a collaborative approach to blended marketing course design, reports on rubric and assessment methods, and evidences of student success and perceptions of the blended course design.

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TRACK: Education