



**Best Practices in Online Learning  
BPOL**

# **2016 BPOL Forum Proceedings**

**May, 2016**

## INTRODUCTION

Best practices are an ongoing issue of professors generally, and online instructors specifically, In order to identify and share best practices in online learning a faculty and staff committee at Nova Southeastern University was established in 2001. The Best Practices in Online Learning (BPOL) Committee sponsors a yearly forum that puts a spotlight on best practices. This year, some of the results of the 2016 Forum have been collected in this Proceedings. Enjoy

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Forum Web Site – [www.bpol.weebly.com](http://www.bpol.weebly.com)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2
FORUM SCHEDULE .....	3
FORUM SESSIONS .....	8
COMMITTEE MEMBERS .....	42
FORUM PICTURES .....	55

# FORUM SCHEDULE

**Quality Online Education: Innovations and Best Practices**  
**NSU Committee for Best Practices in Online Learning**  
**SPRING 2016 Forum**

**Date:** Tuesday, April 19

**Hours:** 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** Knight Auditorium (Room 1124) Carl DeSantis Building, NSU Main Campus

**8:00 a.m.-8:40 a.m.: BREAKFAST**

**8:40 a.m. -8:45 a.m. Welcoming** by Anymir Orellana, Committee Chair **(Room 1124)**

**8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Keynote Session: *Quality Online Education***, by Kaye Shelton, Associate Professor at Lamar University. **(Room 1124—ZOOM Web session available)**

**9:35 a.m. - 10:20 a.m. Breakout Sessions**

- *An Innovative way to Integrate Online Education for Health Care Students During the Clinical Year of Training*, by Ingrid Pichardo Murray. **(Room 1124—ZOOM Web session available)**
- *How to Double or Triple Student Participation/Engagement in Threaded Class Discussions Without Being Coercive or Punitive*, by Robert Hill. **(Room 1047)**
- *Toward Flipping the Classroom: Working the NSU Technology Systems for Student Success*, by Steve Kramer. **(Room 1048)**
- *Building a Learning Community to Promote Integration of Technology*, FCE's Technology Integration Learning Community. **(Room 1049)**
- *Using BB Tools for Efficient Course Management and Deliver From a Faculty Perspective*, by Deborah Seepersaud. **(Room 1052)**

**10:20 a.m. - 10:35 a.m. BREAK**

**10:35 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Breakout Sessions**

- *Transitioning From Traditional to Hybrid Instruction: Best Practices and Caveats*, by Mary Blackington. **(Room 1124—ZOOM Web session available)**
- *Now Let's ask the Students: Breaking Down the Fourth Wall*, by Julie Exposito, Tim Gillette, and Corrinne Lockamy. **(Room 1047)**
- *Authentication: Protecting the Integrity of our Academic Programs Through Online Student Identity Verification*, by Judith Slapak-Barski. **(Room 1048)**
- *Enhancing Presence in Online Courses*, by FCE's Technology Integration Learning Community. **(Room 1049)**
- *Best Practices for Creating Engaging Lectures: Experiences with SharkMedia*, by Carolyn Berger. **(Room 1052)**

**11:25 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.: "Pearls of Wisdom"** presentations and discussions by various presenters **(Room 1124—ZOOM Web session available)**

**11:55 a.m.: Concluding remarks and prize drawing (Room 1124)**

### **DESCRIPTION OF SESSIONS**

**Keynote Session: *Quality Online Education***, by Kaye Shelton, Associate Professor at Lamar University.

Dr. Shelton teaches in the fully online doctoral program in Educational Leadership. Much of her research is in quality online education and technology use to support change and innovation. She is a co-author of the book *An Administrator's Guide to Online Education* and developed the OLC Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Education Programs.

***An Innovative way to Integrate Online Education for Health Care Students During the Clinical Year of Training***, by Ingrid Pichardo Murray [im200@nova.edu](mailto:im200@nova.edu)

During this session, the presenter will showcase how students of the health care professions have an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues of the same subject area on various case studies through online learning during the clinical phase of training. The online forum allows for students to teach and learn one another by sharing diagnostic and treatment ideas using evidence based medicine principles. In addition, students can engage in online discussions that involve solving cases, problems, and treatment outcomes that involve integrating evidence based medicine articles. The forum allows for the students to all be exposed to the same online training materials once they are training in their respective field. It allows for an opportunity for the students to teach and learn different topics that are supported by evidence based medicine principals.

***How to Double or Triple Student Participation/Engagement in Threaded Class Discussions Without Being Coercive or Punitive***, by Robert Hill [hillr@nova.edu](mailto:hillr@nova.edu)

In this highly-interactive session, industry best practices will be shared along with an exclusive look at the instructor's own current semester class discussion boards to demonstrate specific strategies/techniques he employs to maximize students' engagement and to foster a safe online learning community. Audience members will immediately be able to apply some of these pedagogical methods to their own current classes that very day.

***Toward Flipping the Classroom: Working the NSU Technology Systems for Student Success***, by Steve Kramer [steve.kramer@nova.edu](mailto:steve.kramer@nova.edu)

Enter the BlackBoard classroom from the student's perspective and see how this instructor tries to create a quality flipped experience. Includes both ground and online section examples.

***Building a Learning Community to Promote Integration of Technology***, by FCE's Technology Integration Learning Community (Jennifer Gunter Reeves [jennreev@nova.edu](mailto:jennreev@nova.edu), Maureen McDermott [mmcdermo@nova.edu](mailto:mmcdermo@nova.edu), Jia Borrer [jb239@nova.edu](mailto:jb239@nova.edu), Jason Karp [karpj@nova.edu](mailto:karpj@nova.edu), and Gabriela Mendez [gmendez@nova.edu](mailto:gmendez@nova.edu))

Technology is changing at a rapid pace making learning new skills and keeping up with digital natives a formidable task. Say goodbye to working in isolation, and hello to technology infusion through modernized online learning communities. This presentation showcases the most effective ways to become an engaging educator/professional using mobile resources, cutting-edge apps, ubiquitous social media resources, and effective learning strategies from practitioners infusing technology to deliver effective solutions to technology savvy learners

***Using BB Tools for Efficient Course Management and Deliver From a Faculty Perspective***, by Deborah Seepersaud [seepersa@nova.edu](mailto:seepersa@nova.edu)

During this session the presenter will exemplify how faculty can use BB tools for efficient course management and delivery. Some tools include Date Management tool for course editing, Student Preview tool that enables a preview of changes, Grade Center-Needs Grading Tool, Smart View and Retention Center.

***Transitioning From Traditional to Hybrid Instruction: Best Practices and Caveats***, by Mary Blackington [maryb@nova.edu](mailto:maryb@nova.edu)

As the Director of the Hybrid DPT Program at NSU - Tampa, I have had the honor to transition a curriculum from 100% traditional instruction to completely hybrid learning. During this session, I will share and exemplify how primary principles of moving to a hybrid curriculum have been implemented, including: 1) Using the Community of Inquiry (COI) Framework in Hybrid Education; 2) Creating a pattern for Online and Face to Face (F2F) learning; 3) Restructuring the traditional classroom; and 4) Assessing student performance in hybrid learning.

***Now Let's Ask the Students: Breaking Down the Fourth Wall***, Discussion by a panel of NSU graduates and students: Julie Exposito (December 2015 graduate), Tim Gillette (current online Ed.D. student) and Corrinne Lockamy (current online Ed.D. student)

How do adult learners feel about their experiences in an online environment at NSU? Two current students and one recent graduate will share their perspective of learning in an online setting through Bb at NSU. Ask these seasoned students their candid thoughts about what works and what does not in a quality online learning experience. The online learners will field specific questions to offer a dual perspective for teaching and learning in a technology-rich environment and provide a seldom consulted and often overlooked voice that can pave the way for recommendations for future online course design models, asynchronous and synchronous learning, and effective, engaging, and innovative strategies in online learning.

***Authentication: Protecting the Integrity of our Academic Programs Through Online Student Identity Verification***, by Judith Slapak-Barski [js3060@nova.edu](mailto:js3060@nova.edu)

According to NSU's core values of Academic Excellence and Integrity, paired with SACS guidelines for accreditation, it is a must to protect the integrity of our academic programs. This session will present different options and flavors of proctored examinations and online student identity verification, and the nuances and ins-and-outs of implementing such initiatives.

***Enhancing Presence in Online Courses***, by FCE's Technology Integration Learning Community Charles Schlosser [cschloss@nova.edu](mailto:cschloss@nova.edu), Jennifer Gunter Reeves [jennreev@nova.edu](mailto:jennreev@nova.edu), Jason Karp [karpj@nova.edu](mailto:karpj@nova.edu), Julie Alemany [alemany@nova.edu](mailto:alemany@nova.edu), Maureen McDermott [mmcdermo@nova.edu](mailto:mmcdermo@nova.edu), and Gabriela Mendez [gmendez@nova.edu](mailto:gmendez@nova.edu)

In this roundtable, a group of professors at the Fischler College of Education will share their experiences in enhancing presence in online courses. These members of an online learning community will describe how they enrich the design of their courses by including tools and activities that promote students interaction with learning content, other students, and the instructor.

***Best Practices for Creating Engaging Lectures: Experiences with SharkMedia***, by Carolyn Berger [cs453@nova.edu](mailto:cs453@nova.edu)

This roundtable will focus on best practices for developing online lectures that are meaningful and engaging. Tips and tricks for planning and creating recorded lectures will be discussed. The presenter will discuss her experiences utilizing platforms such as Kaltura/SharkMedia.

### **PEARLS OF WISDOM**

Various presenters will share short (five minutes or fewer) tips and techniques they use in their online or hybrid courses.

# FORUM SESSIONS

Best Practices for Engaging Online Learners:  
Experiences with SharkMedia  
Carolyn Berger, Ph.D.

### Introduction

Videotaping online presentations is a daunting task for faculty who are accustomed to presenting face-to-face. SharkMedia and CaptureSpace are excellent resources faculty can use to easily videotape lectures from either their home or work office. This presentation will cover tips for planning videotaped lectures on CaptureSpace, good practices to use during the video recording, ways to integrate opportunities for engagement, and strategies for overcoming obstacles.

### Planning Videotaped Class Presentations

It is crucial that faculty take the time to plan videotaped presentations. First, faculty should think about key points that they aim to highlight in the video. This will help determine the focus of the presentation, as well as the time frame. If a faculty is focusing on one key concept and would like to illustrate this concept, the video might only be 4-5 minutes long. However, if this is a video for a “flipped” class where a whole chapter of the text will be covered, the presentation would be closer to 20-30 minutes long. Faculty need to consider the students’ attention spans when planning a videotaped presentation. Videos that are too long or too packed with information will cause students to tune out.

Once the key points of the video are determined, the faculty may consider translating the content into a presentation format (e.g., PowerPoint, Google Slides, Slidebean). Faculty should think of ways to engage the viewer by using creative presentation techniques such as role play, imbedding video clips, exploring websites, and using other visual aids. Students will be more likely to pay attention if the presenter shares stories and speaks about his/her own experiences as opposed to defining concepts from the textbook. Faculty may find it useful to write notes regarding the key points in advance to ensure that the concepts are all covered. However, the notes should be used as a guide and not as a script.

The technology preparation is important as well. It is helpful to obtain training through Izone to prepare for the technical process of recording the video. While CaptureSpace is easy to use, a training will help faculty understand different options for recording, pausing during recording, and editing the video afterwards. Faculty should conduct a few test videos first to make sure the sound, camera angle, and tone of voice used are appropriate.

### Recording the Videotaped Lecture

While conducting the recording, the presenter should look into camera as much as possible if using the webcam. I highly recommend using a webcam so students can see the presenter; they are more likely to pay attention and feel engaged. Faculty should make sure to change the tone of their voice when speaking. It is beneficial to view the video after recording to ensure voice is not monotone. Monitoring facial expressions is essential - smile and laugh occasionally if appropriate. While videotaping I find it helpful to pretend I am talking to a person as opposed to a computer monitor.

As highlighted in the preparation stages, while recording, use visual aids and creative methods of presentation to hold students' interests. This is especially important if the presentation is more than five minutes long. Eliminate as many distractions as possible. This may include people talking in the hallway (record after office hours or at home), clocks chiming, dogs barking, phones ringing, etc. Computer "pop up" messages can be unexpected distractions so those reminders and alerts should be turned off. Phones should be silenced completely as even phone vibration noises can be distracting to the presenter and the students. And of course, refrain from eating, drinking, or chewing gum while presenting.

### Integrating Opportunities for Engagement

It is important to integrate opportunities for engagement within the videotaped presentation. These engagement opportunities are activities students must participate in either during or after the video. Ideas for engaging students include: 1) Asking questions in the video that students will answer (and reply to others' answers) on discussion board; 2) Assign students to discussion board groups for brainstorming or discussing a topic that was presented in video; 3) Have students answer questions regarding scenarios/role plays (can have them post to assignment dropbox or discussion board); 4) Have students create videos to illustrate a concept demonstrated in the presentation; 5) Give students a problem and ask, "what would you do?"; 6) Recount a scenario and ask, "How could you respond appropriately?"; 7) Ask student to write a reflection regarding how the videotape applied to them, their opinions, etc.; or 8) Complete an assignment that applies the information learned (e.g., research a topic further, try out something they learned).

Follow-up is essential to these engagement opportunities. When assigning discussion board posts, the instructor should participate in the discussion threads. This demonstrates that the professor is reading what is posted and that he/she cares about what is being shared in the discussion boards. If the class load is too high for active discussion board participation, the professor could assign students to groups and require them to offer each other feedback. The professor could then engage at least once with each group. If assignments are given, feedback should be provided to the students about whether or not they are on the right track. Follow-up and feedback on engagement opportunities should be provided within a timely manner to keep students engaged on that topic.

### Obstacles & Resources

There are a number of obstacles when creating videotaped lectures; however, these are all surmountable obstacles. While mastering the technical components of videotaping can be intimidating for some, it is important for faculty to prepare adequately and receive proper training and instruction. Izone has excellent resources and support for faculty attempting to videotape for the first time, as well as for more experienced faculty who want to expand their technical skills. Another obstacle is time. Videotaping can be time consuming in the beginning, but eventually is a big timesaver as saved videos can be used more than once. However, professors should keep in mind that if they do want to reuse videos, they should abstain from referring to specific dates or events as this might render their video to be outdated if used a second time. While it can be challenging to manage all distractions, they can be minimized with effective planning. When videotaping, faculty can pause the video if a distraction occurs. Videos

can also be edited with assistance from Izone. Portions that need to be removed from the video can be clipped, but new information cannot be edited within the CaptureSpace platform.

### Conclusion

Recording online presentation can be challenging at first, but once faculty have mastered the technology through training and practice, recording video presentations can actually save time and energy! Faculty should follow the tips highlighted in this presentation and consult with technology trainers as needed to improve their technology skills. Once videos are created they can be used for multiple semesters, but of course faculty should regularly update them to incorporate new and timely information relevant to the subject matter. It is crucial that faculty pay attention to student feedback on these videos and modify the lectures accordingly.

### Helpful Links

Izone link for using CaptureSpace:

<https://www.nova.edu/portal/oit/support/sss/sharkmedia/index.html>

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## Building a Learning Community to Promote Integration of Technology

### Introduction

We – you and I – and the ongoing dialogue we should be having with each other, are a vital resource for ongoing PD! One of the best forms of professional development is also free. We can learn so much from each other. When budgets get tight, we need to teach and learn with/from friends and colleagues. And of course, there are so many great learning resources available on line, many from teachers and technologists like you and I! (Welsh, 2015, para. 13)

The Technology Integration Learning Community (TILC) is a professional learning community (PLC) consisting of nine professors from the Fischler College of Education (FCE) at Nova Southeastern University who exemplify a wide range of expertise and skills related to teaching, research, and technology.

### Relevant Literature

Meaningful technology integration does not focus on any particular technology. According to Kim, Lee, Merrill, Spector, and Merrienboer (2008), “technology is successfully integrated into learning and instruction when the interest and focus are not on the technology but rather on that which the technology makes possible” (p. 811). Similarly, Spector (2016) suggests that “successful integration of an educational technology is marked by that technology being regarded by users as an unobtrusive facilitator of learning, instruction, or performance” (p. 166).

PLCs provide educators a forum to collaborate, challenging traditional conceptions of online education as an individual and isolated endeavor (Martin-Kniep, 2004; Mullen & Schunk, 2010). In order for PLCs to be successful, they must have a shared vision, meet regularly, work collaboratively, and focus on student learning (DuFour et al., 2008; Martin-Kniep, 2004; Owen, 2014; Reeves et al., 2015).

FCE’s TILC embodies an autonomous and safe academic forum of professional development, incorporating the technology integration principles described by Spector (2016) and offering faculty opportunities to learn, share, reflect, and discuss integration ideas for our courses (offered in online, face-to-face, and blended/hybrid formats).

### Background

The TILC emerged out of a FCE blue sky thinking focus group seeking to increase student engagement in May 2012. The founding members of the TILC envisioned giving every faculty member and incoming student an iPad; fully integrating mobile learning into the education curriculum. The Dean of FCE agreed to fund a pilot study for the iPad initiative. The iPad initiative began with training focused on teaching faculty from one small master’s program how to integrate mobile devices into the curriculum. In the early phases of the iPad initiative, we learned what worked (i.e., collaboration, ongoing support) and ultimately, what did not work (i.e., lack of accountability, limited training; Lacey, Gunter, & Reeves, 2014).

We decided to apply our newfound knowledge by creating an online learning community; Zoom was our training platform and we began by learning how to use the iPad for teaching and

learning. We evolved from focusing solely on iPads to general technology integration; hence, our TILC name emerged. We implemented a collaborative training approach, where each month we learn about a new tool (e.g., social media, instructional videos, flipped learning, YouTube, Google), and then discussed integration ideas for our courses. We ensure accountability by challenging each member to integrate at least one new tool into our courses each semester.

Since the TILC's inception, we have presented at over 20 local, national, and international conferences and published three articles. We incorporated flipped learning, YouTube videos, Pinterest, Blogs, Wikis, instructional videos, Google Apps for Education (i.e., Docs, Drive, Voice, Forms, Sheets, Slides), mobile learning, Avatars and other animations, Remind, interactive online simulations, QR codes, and electronic posters into our curriculum. The TILC has had an effect on the members, the community in which they work, and the community of their students.

### Recommendations

Want to build a learning community to promote technology integration in your courses? Reeves, et al. (2015) recommend seven important components to building a successful PLC: (a) recruit engaged colleagues; (b) define clear goals; (c) meet regularly; (d) use technological tools; (e) include collaborative, hands-on training; (f) create a safe environment for sharing; and (g) hold each other accountable. Within this framework successful technology integration is attainable, as well as professional presentations and publications, and personal learning goals.

### Conclusion

Since becoming members of the TILC we are more engaged in the teaching and learning process; and in turn, our students are more engaged! We have learned a plethora of new skills and tools that we integrate into our courses. We share and explore new technology tools on a regular basis. Although some consider the constant evolution and change in technologies a barrier for technology integration (e.g., Funkhouser & Mouza, 2013; Ryan & Bagley, 2015), innovations keep TILC members excited about experimenting with new tools. We will continue to provide a community where each member can mature professionally, share what we know with others, and encourage other faculties to form their own professional learning communities. "Every faculty member has something to contribute to a PLC -- and something to learn, as well" (Reeves et al., 2015, p. 10).

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## Toward Flipping the Classroom: Working the NSU Technology Systems for Student Success

Presenter: Dr. Steve Kramer, Associate Professor of Decision Sciences, Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University. [steve.kramer@nova.edu](mailto:steve.kramer@nova.edu) Office: 954-262-5002.

Introduction. We've all been there. As committed faculty we try to make and keep our students engaged AND learning. And technology is, of course, our "silver bullet." Maybe that's what we all thought. As an academic with an engineering and operations management background I suspected the efficiencies through technology may not all be value additions to the classroom. In fact, my early attempts of incorporating technology were as clumsy as the next instructor's and hardly silver. I was using my old paradigm of lecture in the classroom and trying to sprinkle technology on it for some "gee whiz." I hadn't considered that technology may enable me to rethink the entire classroom experience and even delve into the sacred "out of class" time. Technology may help move me toward flipping the classroom.

Now classroom "flipping" sounds as much of a panacea as the "application of technology." Why consider flipping? Our College of Business has committed to a branding of "Real World MBA." What that means to me is that I not only expose my students to relevant thinking in their MBA journey, but that I create capable practitioners. And there is the rub. I have just enough time to cover the lecture in the classroom, and not enough time to then apply/practice/discuss/compare and contrast, etc. that are higher levels of learning enabling students to then synthesize the information in future use.

One of my first applications of technology was actually a "distance learning" class wherein I synchronously transmitted a ground class to another campus. A feature of that environment was the recording of the classroom experience. That included mostly me lecturing and then some questions from both local and remote viewers. I held onto those videos because I realized my students could then refer back to them for study and I could reuse them to support future classes. Keep in mind that these were three hour recordings - each.

Going forward I started making those (previous) recordings available to incoming students, but realized that in doing so removed a reason for students to come to class (sound familiar?). I came to the realization that the classroom is really the "sacred" time and I need to exploit it for only what it can provide – the interaction of the students in discussion, application, practice and now I had the appreciation that lecture no longer needs to be in the classroom. I simply assigned my old recordings of the lectures within the classroom as pre-work for the classroom.

Now that was painful for the students: watch a recording of a lecture within a classroom with marginal audio and video, to say nothing of the audio system's lack of inability to pick up student questions and comments well. It did, however, give me a start. How could I improve that lecture? One simple way was to create topic-specific lectures in a controlled environment to guarantee good audio and video. I started by going to the library and using their digital video camcorder and wireless lavalier microphone in one of the MicroLab classrooms. I put the camera on a tripod, clipped on the microphone and recorded myself in front of no one as I

lectured, gestured and consumed the white board. I quickly realized that classroom lighting is not flattering, so added two reflector lights (from Home Depot at \$6 ea) that I clipped onto classroom chairs.

I then transferred the video (with audio) to my computer and used a free video editing utility (Microsoft Movie Maker) to add basic (but useful) effects such as video title and credits, as well as inserting pictures of the Powerpoint slides (simply save your presentation as .jpg and you will be prompted to save the current or all slides as separate images which are dragged and dropped in your video at will). I then up-loaded the video to Tegrity (at the time), and now to SharkMedia. Now I create Blackboard content using Kaltura Media mashups (which enable you to bring in your videos stored in SharkMedia) and assign them to be viewed prior to class.

Works great, right? Well ... in theory. I started explaining my flipped approach to my classes on the very first day: no more lecture, no more Powerpoint in my classroom. We use the classroom for discussion, so you must watch the assigned video(s) prior to class! The students are all, "Yay!" but old habits are not easy to break. I walk into class on the second day ready to do all the discussion, application, etc. only to encounter a rather complete lack of preparation. What I do now is give a short quiz at the beginning of each class to assess whether they watched the requisite video prep. That seems to be working. They are now accountable (points are on the line) and I now have an entire class period to engage prepared students to achieve higher levels of learning. Oh, and it's much more fun for all.

Update: I now do this for all my ground classes – undergraduate and graduate. What about online? Well, actually part of my inspiration for creating the canned lectures was to support them. I was not satisfied assigning readings from texts and articles. I still provide the publisher's Powerpoint slides in my Course Content area of Blackboard, but tell them that's only for reference. I sometimes include the publisher's or my own slides into my videos. What about the classroom equivalent for the online learners? I put discussion prompts in the Blackboard Discussion Board and encourage students to answer using their experiences (as if they were in a regular classroom). I am not a proponent of synchronous online requirements: I have weekly chat sessions with my online class (using GoToTraining) and record and post these for all in the class and attendance at chat is not mandatory. I also now record other student meetings and presentations and actually stream the events when possible to enable interaction. I can enable students to participate in student activities virtually using GoToTraining because unlike SharkMedia's CaptureSpace, it is two-way and records the student interaction (well, not the chat detail, but it does capture the audio and any video from students).

In conclusion, I have found what I believe a useful place for some of our available technology in working toward higher levels of student learning. I have done it in a very "independent" way meaning I don't have to rely only anyone other than myself and I like that. If I can do it, then so can you. I now have a library of videos in SharkMedia. I also share them with my colleagues – I am the CAL (course academic lead) for some courses so my adjuncts use my videos.

# How to Double or Triple Student Participation/Engagement in Threaded Class Discussions without Being Coercive or Punitive

by

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The disadvantages of asynchronous discussion are downplayed when the discussion prompts and questions are well-constructed and stimulating, the facilitating instructor has some skill in tending discussion, and there is a clear beginning and ending schedule for the asynchronous discussion, with students willing to post throughout the week rather than all jumping in during the last two days of a week. (Ko & Rossen, 2010, p.321)

## Introduction

Online education has proven it is not just another educational fad as the number of fully-online courses and even degree programs keep growing every year. As more and more students, especially the adult learners, enroll in these courses due to the seemingly appealing convenience and flexibility, more and more faculty will be asked to teach online. Dixson (2010) opined that it is thus imperative for faculty to understand what engages students in order to provide effective online learning environments. Regardless of whether one is teaching live in person, fully online, or in a blended/hybrid format, there is common teacher behavior in all three instructional delivery formats. A conscientious and student-centered professor in a live traditional classroom will most likely also be a conscientious online faculty member who is student centered. It follows that if a skilled educator who has honed his or her craft can adeptly facilitate a live classroom discussion, he or she can also do so in the asynchronous, text-based format of the online environment with some simple commonsense strategies (Hill, 2010).

## Two Schools of Thought

Online, threaded class discussions have great possibilities for faculty to promote reflective critical thinking skills. While the classroom discussion board ostensibly tries to replicate the in-class instructor- and student-led conversations found on a typical college campus, it is viewed differently by some faculty. Nowadays, with the worry of microaggressions sprouting up on campus, concerns about political correctness, and the need to issue trigger warnings when discussing uncomfortable subject matter, the threaded class discussion can provide a much-needed respite from the live classroom. Moreover, instead of blurting aloud a response to a professor's question, the need to thoughtfully compose one's response in a written posting encourages students to utilize higher-order thinking skills.

A number of faculty may look at the online discussion board as the students' open forum and steer clear from it due to possible fear of either stirring the conversation or conversely silencing some students' opinions. There is concern that perhaps the views expressed might offend or contradict the professor; so typically faculty might just monitor the often-robust conversations and back and forth exchanges from the sidelines. The other school of thought is to actively participate and mix it up with the students online, playing devil's advocate and raising points to consider and advance the conversation. Additionally, contributing publicly or replying back privately to a posting or a peer response from another student helps maintain the overall online learning community and promote civil discourse. It also lets the students know that the faculty member on the other end of the computer screen is not only reading but engaging with them.

## Instructor Presence

Long before there was ever any online education, Astin (1993) in his seminal work expressed that frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement. Twenty-three years later, Ko & Rossen (2010) advised that the online faculty member “must establish a presence and rapport in your classroom that are evident to students as soon as they walk through the online classroom door” (p. 299). This presence can be initiated prior to the actual start of the semester with a simple introductory welcome letter, and then perpetuated in a number of ways by utilizing the various course tool features that are available. These include responding to students’ course messages and email inquiries in a timely fashion, posting course announcements, updating the homepage, maintaining the online course grade book, grading and returning students’ work with prompt feedback, scheduling synchronous class sessions, holding online office hours and of course through faculty participation on the discussion board.

### Specific Strategies

In the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS), one has the option on the discussion board under edit “forum settings” to use either “the standard view” defaulted option or to select “participants must create a thread in order to view other threads in this forum.” Choosing the second option really forces the students to “elevate their games” so to speak before they click submit. Other strategies would be to have two-week class discussions where students post one week and then reply to class peers in the following week instead of being required to do both within the very same week. The instructor can also provide a choice of discussion prompts for each threaded class discussion and consider publishing them ahead of time along with a calendar of when both the substantive posting and the minimum required peer replies are due. However, only the current discussion board should be kept open. In other words, if one sets up the weeks to start on a Monday and end on the following Sunday evening, then the practice should be to go in on Monday morning each week and either assess the students and/or lock that discussion board before opening the new one. This keeps the students focused on just the current class discussion without working ahead and allows the faculty member some degree of flexibility to add a prompt related to a current event ripped from the headlines. It would also be a good strategy to count the initial threaded discussion for less, gradually raising the stakes a point or two over the next two discussions as the students acclimate to the format.

It is equally important to encourage the students to first compose outside of the discussion forum and then “cut and paste” the edited/proofread passages directly into the text box. Do not allow file attachments (one can easily do this via the forum settings) that students have to open in order to read. Remind the students to cite from the required course textbooks and any other outside reference sources to support their assertions, but also not to be sticklers for form and style issues. Allow the students to use personal pronouns and not rigidly adhere to APA form and style in this forum as opposed to in the more formal major written assignments as their content should be of the utmost importance in such postings. In live classroom discussions, most faculty typically do not require their students to answer questions aloud in complete sentences or with perfect subject-verb and/or pronoun-antecedent agreement. In fact, in a traditional classroom students rarely even get to read their classmates’ writing.

In an online course, students post and reply at all hours of day and night. If this course requirement is to be taken seriously, the forums should be a safe zone for the free exchange of ideas and diverse points of view. Requiring students who are practitioners from all across the nation working in different types of public and private settings, to respond to well-thought out

prompts enables them to take the academic theory from the course readings and apply it to their own unique settings. That can significantly impact the students' overall learning.

When grading the bi-weekly discussions, it is important to proffer specific academic feedback (more than "good ideas" or "great suggestion") referencing the students' own words rather than just assigning the quantitative score. Also, instructors should try to not always publicly comment or reply back to the same students every week. This can be challenging when some students consistently post earlier than others. For some of the postings, instructors should consider tackling particularly probing questions themselves and posting their own responses for the students to see and read (after the students submit their own postings), and also allow/encourage them to reply back. Furthermore, they should specify their expectations regarding class participation on the discussion board in the course syllabus and then reinforce them in a course orientation held during the first week. That can be provided synchronously and recorded for those who cannot participate live. It can also be prerecorded and sent out as a video link. There should be no mystery as to what is expected from the students throughout the semester or on how the students will be evaluated.

#### Conclusion

If faculty make it a point during the first week or two of the semester to both model and encourage participation, it will make all the difference for the duration of the semester. Faculty commitment to engagement, specifically on the class discussion board, will have a domino effect on their students' behavior and lead to a rewarding online course.

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*BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE LEARNING (BPOL)*  
Proceedings Guidelines

List of Presenters

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Abstract

How do adult learners feel about their experiences in an online environment at NSU? Two current students and one recent graduate will share their perspective of learning in an online setting through Blackboard at Nova Southeastern University. Ask these seasoned students their candid thoughts about what works and what does not in a quality online learning experience. The online learners will field specific questions to offer a dual perspective for teaching and learning in a technology-rich environment and provide a seldom consulted and often overlooked voice to pave the way for recommendations for future online course design models, asynchronous and synchronous learning, and effective, engaging, and innovative strategies in online learning.

# Now Let's Ask the Students: Breaking Down the Fourth Wall

by

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## Introduction

Technology-based instruction provides benefits over traditional face-to-face instruction (Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2013). In adult education, Ranieri and Pachler (2014) claimed more attention should be paid to the interplay between technologies and learning opportunities. The process of improving course design and teaching is as important as learning outcomes (Chauhan, Naseem, & Rashwan, 2016). The success of using technology also depends on the instructor's attitudes, integration, and utilization in the teaching process. Communication and collaboration can increase through online learning; technology has modified the teaching roles from being teacher-centered to learner-centered, and allows learners to assess their own work and monitor their own progress, which may motivate learners to complete work (Abukhattala, 2016). Technology provides innovative methods for teaching and learning, as well as solutions for learning resources. Online learning can promote more interaction and cognitive engagement (Wichadee, 2013). However, according to Lawn and Lawn (2015), there are problems like instructor availability and responsiveness and connection difficulty. Lawn and Lawn found a correlation between the number of online conversations and increased motivation and communication.

## Narrative Body

Students enrolled in doctoral programs are professionals who are dedicated to learning and advancing their academic and professional goals. However, they are also very busy people who must allocate their time wisely as they try to balance their lives with various interests and responsibilities. As such, when taking online programs, students need the program features to be user-friendly and to include current and relevant resources that support the objectives of the program. Professors do not always live in the same state as their students. At times, it becomes difficult to hold online classes and class meetings may not happen. If students do not interact with each other and the professor, students may become disengaged. Communication and connectivity is important between professors and students; contact information should be listed, along with any notes of times not to call and expectations of time for email responses for both the student and professor. To ensure these features are incorporated in their online programs, professors should consider the following suggestions.

### Make the Online Program Features User-Friendly

Professors should conduct a live and recorded Collaborate session to orient students to the Blackboard application; this is where first impressions are made and a feel for the course is developed. Additionally, there should be a review of Blackboard during the term that is similar to an orientation, using a point/click reveal process (if not live). As students use Blackboard, they need to be able to find information easily and quickly. In this regard, professors should organize their resources on Blackboard for easy navigating and include a map of Blackboard tabs contents on Blackboard and syllabi. If the professor is incorporating any type of collaborative session as part of the course, then all activities related to collaborative sessions should be listed in the same area on Blackboard to include the dates and times for the next collaborative session, how to link into the collaborative session, and the recordings of past collaborative sessions. Additionally,

there should be an online Blackboard class repository for students to share materials that is open the entire term where students can meet and share material.

Another suggestion would be to list the dates of all online collaborative sessions on the course syllabus and calendar, as well as the home page of Blackboard. As with all resources, students should not have to waste time navigating Blackboard to find the information they need to meet the course requirements. Finally, adapting the applications to focus on the immediate delivery of messages through a “pop-up” mechanism to display messages the moment they are received, a user-generated visible list of other users, and a mechanism for indicating when people are online and available to receive messages could provide a transparent interaction.

#### Include Current and Relevant Information

Just like professors want students to use current and relevant references in their research work, students want professors to provide current and relevant information on Blackboard. In this regard, professors should take the time prior to each semester term to update their syllabus, instructor notes, course resources, course calendar, and course assignments. Professors should also take the time to provide current articles on Blackboard, which pertain to the course objectives and assignments. One suggestion here would be to provide current articles and suggestions for additional course books and resources, tips for best practices, examples, web references, and videos on Blackboard on a weekly basis under a link entitled *Current Resources*. In doing so, professors would show their dedication and commitment to providing the students a meaningful learning experience. Professors should record modules and use them as references. It is also important to verify that all embedded course links are active before the course goes live.

Obviously, online learning should be a positive experience for both the student and the professor. Professors should understand the importance of contributing to the success of their students by making it easy for them to comprehend the course expectations and by contributing articles that support the course objectives. Sometimes course material on the Blackboard contains information regarding calendar dates, required readings, and work assignments that pertained to prior offerings of the course and were no longer required or relevant to the current course offering. As such, the failure to take the time to update the course information can often result in confusion and frustration on the part of the student.

Finally, there should be considerations for working with those with disabilities. Some disabilities are progressive and many change during the time of the course, affecting the student in various ways. Instructors should create course, resources, and orientation materials that are accessible to all. When designing instruction and creating electronic resources for courses, Section 508 standards are important, especially in the following areas:

- Text - Headings should be properly used to create a hierarchical order, and color contrast should be adequate and not convey meaning. Tables should have column and row headers.
- Video - Captions and descriptive narration are needed for video elements.
- Images & Graphics - Visual elements need alternative text and narrative descriptions.
  - Audio - Transcripts need to be included with audio files (Grand Rapids Community College, n.d.)

Prezi can cause motion sickness. Prezi makes some people feel dizzy and can have other ensuing health-related issues. If this tool is used, it is important to consider the transitions and try to avoid moving from one corner of the presentation board to the other (thus generating expansive fly-overs). Making simple moves from one screen area to the

next will eliminate the nauseating effects of cross-screen movement.

#### *Students with Visual Disability*

- PowerPoints with embedded text – screen readers will not work. Video content that has audio is great, but if there are chart and graphs without explanation, that information may be missed. Third party websites and reference software may conflict with screen readers and too many colors and variation of fonts/texts may complicate reading/access.

#### *Working with Veterans*

- Many veterans take a variety of medication, some of which will affect mood, energy, and emotions. This can affect participation in class, ability to turn in assignments on time and/or attending all class meetings. Online instructors may have to create a flexible assignment policy for them.

#### Conclusion

There is a need for college faculty, staff members, and administrators to explore new technologies for improving communication with their students. Non-traditional students may have a challenging time with the technology, so adjustments may need to be implemented to serve a student appropriately. By using forms of technology to improve communication with their students, faculty, staff members, and administrators may have a better chance of connecting with their students, keeping them informed, and getting them engaged. Overall, the NSU professors have done a good job in designing their courses on Blackboard and facilitating student learning. However, achieving excellence always requires a commitment to finding ways to do things better (Collins, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). These suggestions may help gain a multi-perspective and aid stakeholders to achieve more success in pursuing its mission to enhance student learning and outcomes.

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Title: Transitioning from Traditional to Hybrid Instruction: Best Practices & Caveats

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Introduction:

Physical therapy is the consummate “hands-on” profession, and physical therapist education typically provided in traditional classrooms using a combination of lecture and psychomotor training along with clinical internships. The idea of transitioning from a traditional lecture/lab paradigm to a hybrid model of PT education was met with great resistance from almost all stakeholders. This session provides insight into the modification of a traditional program into a hybrid doctor of physical therapy (DPT) program, focusing on the best practices and caveats identified over a 5-year time frame.

Background:

Why even consider a hybrid DPT program? As the degree in physical therapy moved to the entry-level doctorate, the costs of full-time education coupled with the inability to work made access to PT education unattainable for many prospective (and qualified) applicants. Nova Southeastern University (NSU) has a rich tradition of innovative education delivery models to meet the needs of working adults. Individuals from the physical therapy (PT) department recognized the need for a professional program that was flexible to accommodate working students, including non-traditional students with families and other responsibilities, as well as those who were geographically restricted and could not move because of family or financial reasons. Further, adult learning and constructivist learning theories recognize the benefits of active learning, self-regulation in learning, and frequent application of concepts. A hybrid DPT program theoretically provides the best of both worlds: Flexibility to select times for learning that work best as well as hands-on application of concepts and skills.

Lacking existing examples of hybrid models of PT Education, we sought a conceptual model to modify the existing 3-year traditional program in Ft. Lauderdale to a blended, 4-year program in Tampa. Garrison and Vaughan (2008) define hybrid learning as the “thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences” and distinguish it as distinct from traditional face-to-face (F2F) programs or purely online programs. The key phrase “thoughtful fusion” challenged us purposefully blend the best elements of asynchronous online learning with synchronous, face-to-face and hands-on learning. The focus on blending, and not adding, helped us develop a culture of carefully selecting instructional activities that fit the mode of instruction as well as linking online and F2F activities to one another. Best practices and caveats were developed over time through the conscious exploration of current literature and a purposeful culture supporting team learning and reflection.

Best Practices:

The four best practices discussed in this presentation included: a) Use of the Community of Inquiry Framework, b) Creating a predictable pattern of OL and F2F learning, c) Restructuring the DPT classroom, and d) Attention to student and faculty assessment

### Using the Community of Inquiry Model

Garrison and Vaughan (2008) describe blended learning through the Community of Inquiry (COI) model. This model recognizes that learning community occurs through the interaction of 3 important components: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. Teaching presence refers to the role of the instructor as facilitator, moderator, and “guide on the side” who manages both content and discourse during online and F2F experiences. Social presence refers to the personal connections, communication, and group cohesiveness that occur across both modalities. Lastly, cognitive presence describes the recursive process where students work through confusion, information exchange, connection of ideas, creating concepts, and testing solutions. We were drawn to this model because it pays equal attention to activities online and face-to-face, and it emphasizes the creation of a learning community that is so important in this hands-on profession. The model also provided a framework to help make decisions: For example, when designing or modifying our courses, we asked, “How will this instructional strategy enhance cognitive presence? Social presence? Teaching presence?”

### Creating a Predictable Pattern of OL and F2F Experiences

This second best practice may seem a bit obvious-however, we learned early on that predictability was key to decreasing student anxiety so that the emphasis can be on learning rather than searching for information. All courses, regardless of content type, are delivered using a hybrid format with 3 weeks of OL instruction followed by 4 days of intensive F2F training. Lecture-type classes are delivered 80% OL and 20% F2F, while lab-based classes are delivered 20% OL and 80% F2F. To maintain equality to the standard Carnegie Unit used in our traditional program, we followed the guidance of Orlenna, Hudgins, and Simonson (2009) and created our classes using the unit, module, topic approach. This approach fostered the division of course content into manageable parts, and also led to the blending of OL with F2F content. For example, information presented during the 3 weeks of OL learning is pulled together and applied during the F2F sessions in the 4<sup>th</sup> week. This pattern is clear and consistent in all of our classes.

### Re-Structure (Don't just FLIP) the Classroom

We found that it was critical to link our course objectives to instructional activities in the OL and F2F classroom in a manner that completely re-structured (and not just flipped) the courses from our traditional program. The natural tendency was to lecture online and perform clinical skills in the classroom, however we quickly learned that we needed to provide psychomotor instruction and opportunities to practice during the OL component. We began to change our assignments—adding learning activities such as students posting pictures or videos on a shared blog so that faculty could observe whether students were learning, and peers could learn not only from the faculty but from one another. In the F2F environment, students are challenged to apply what they've learned based on case scenarios and clinical applications. This restructuring is aligned with our educational philosophies in adult learning and constructivist theories.

## Attention to both Student and Faculty Assessment

While assessment of students and faculty is part of all professional programs, we recognized early on that we had to modify our assessment practices to align with the hybrid world. Although there are companies that proctor students during online testing, we made the decision early to have quizzes OL but all of our high-stakes testing in the F2F environment because it is easier to maintain academic integrity for written exams and more practical to assess psychomotor skills in person. Maintaining integrity of the examinations was an issue that was crucial to our professional accrediting body. We align our assessments with course objectives and the COI model, and also link assessments to skills they need in physical therapist practice such as creating a problem list, goals, and plan of care; or videotaping themselves explaining in layman's terms how inflammation happens in the body. In this way, we assure that students are learning at the level of application and synthesis.

It was also important to align faculty assessment with our hybrid world. We modified the course and instructor evaluations completed by students at the end of each term to align with the hybrid classroom, and distinguished between primarily lecture and lab classes. We also modified the peer assessment process to include peer feedback on our OL and F2F instruction.

### Caveats

We've identified 4 main caveats: The pregnant classroom; Assumptions about technology skills / competence; Variation in the OL classroom; and Death by Assignments.

1. The pregnant classroom refers to the tendency for faculty to overload their courses by filling up the OL classroom and the F2F classroom to the point in which a 3-credit class is more like a 6-credit class. This was one of those painful "AHA" moments that each faculty learned individually.
2. We started this program assuming that faculty would have more difficulty with the technology than our millennial students. We also didn't realize that students reach out to faculty for tech support and not our 24/7-technology support desk. While students are really skilled at posting on FB or snapchat, uploading a video to a course blog is not a skill our students had—and it easily became the focus of their frustration. We now include a 2+ hour session during our F2F orientation that includes many of the technology skills students will need.
3. We also began our program believing that each faculty should have the right to design their class the way they saw fit. Through a review of the literature and humbling reflection, we acknowledged we couldn't be more wrong. As a team, we met to agree on an organizational framework for our Bb classrooms: Course content divided into weeks; the use of a "To-DO" list on each week, and the use of an introductory screen captured lecture to each course explaining to the students how the class was organized. All of these strategies significantly increased the amount of time students spent learning rather than search for information.
4. Last and not least, we learned the painful lesson of "death by assignments." Because we did not quite trust that students would engage and learn over the 3 weeks of OL learning, we

### Conclusion

This presentation summarizes the lessons learned in the past 5 years of transitioning to a hybrid doctor of physical therapy program. We hope that our lessons will help others as they transition their “hands-on” professions to a blended format.

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Blackboard Tools for Efficient Course Management  
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## Introduction

Blackboard Learn is a robust learning management system that allows faculty to design, develop, edit, and deliver their courses in a seamless, efficient, and effective manner. Specific tools, such as the Retention Center immediately gives faculty an academic overview of their course. The tool facilitates monitoring of students' performance and faculty activities.

This presentation demonstrates the Retention Center and other tools that can be used for editing, communicating both synchronously and asynchronously, and managing the Grade Center.

## Editing and Preparing Course for Delivery

In most online environment, the faculty member is the course designer, developer, and instructor. In the role of an instructional designer for a course, the instructor first reviews the course and makes the needed changes. Using the syllabus as a guide, it is important to ensure that all content and "dated" items, such as assignments and discussion forums, are updated according to the semester's timeline.

Beginning with the Course Menu, faculty should review for: obsolete and unused links; links that may have been hidden previously and must now be made available; and re-ordering and possibly re-naming of links to match the syllabus. The Date Management tool within Blackboard Learn allows for all "dated" items to be listed and edited manually or by number of days. Assessing the students can be done either by using the Assignments tool or the test/quizzes tools. Instructors should edit and adjust these items as needed based on the course syllabus and the desired learning objectives. Instructors can verify that these changes have been made by using the Edit On/Off tool.

During the time that faculty are editing their courses, any "dated" content should be reviewed, new folders added, and new materials uploaded. Each term, the university (NSU) provides a "beginning of semester" check list for faculty which is distributed via their Weekly Tech Talk and is archived and available on the Faculty Support webpage.

## Delivering and Managing the course

Students are given access to their courses three days before the start of the semester. It is recommended (by the University) that at this time, instructors should use the Student Preview tool and ensure that all content and "dated" items are accurate. The Student Preview tool allows the faculty to be enrolled and remain in the role of a student (if needed) throughout the course.

Some of the benefits of the use of this tool are it provides access to: the My Grades/Progress tool; and view the To Do Module.

Communicating and establishing a presence with students in the online environment is crucial as often students feel disconnected. Creating announcements, using the discussion boards, blogs, and wikis are all asynchronous communication tools available for use. The university also provides GoToTraining application for synchronous communication. GoToTraining is an easy to use videoconferencing tool. This tool can be used for facilitating group work, scheduling of office hours and online chats.

Understanding and using the Grade Center efficiently benefits the instructor especially when it is time for grading assignments. Using the Inline grading feature for grading assignment submissions is a time-saver. Needs Grading, Smart views, color coding and, re-organizing columns are all options within the Grade Center that benefit the instructor.

Instructors have an immediate academic overview of their course by using the Retention Center. The Retention Center gives information about the student use of Blackboard. The Retention Center facilitates a view of students who are at risk, allows for communication with struggling students, and gives the instructor time to contact student and assist. There are four categories of information in the Retention Center. These categories are missed deadlines, grades, course activity, and course access.

### Summary

With an understanding of Blackboard Learn tools applied in editing, course management, and final delivery of the course, instructors are able to manage their time effectively while at the same time providing students with a worthwhile learning experience. Resources and tutorials are available for the use of these tools on Blackboard.com.

## Promoting self-assessment and goal setting.

### Introduction

“Metacognition is one important facet of human intelligence but it is also the aspect of intelligence that can be more easily promoted by education.” (Cornoldi, 2010, p.257)

The term metacognition “is sometimes used to refer to the kind of processes involved, and/or the self-knowledge gained, in thinking about one’s own thinking, and sometimes to the activity of monitoring and controlling one’s cognitive activity.” (Proust, 2013, p.2) Although the metacognitive processes of reflecting on our learning process and on the products through which we learn is essential to improve our leaning, these metacognitive processes are not common place in education.

Practicing metacognition requires a shift in the teachers and student’s roles. Including metacognition in the learning process entails a shift from considering the teacher as the subject in charge of students’ learning and assessment to considering the student as the person who is responsible for her own learning (Stiggins and Chapuis, 2012; Costa, 1989.) This does not imply that the teacher is excluded from the learning process; rather, it means that the teacher’s role is to facilitate the metacognitive processes that help students be in charge of their own learning. Metacognition requires moving away from the emphasis on assessment to give grades, to classify or label students, or to assess what students learned (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005; Earl, 2013.) When metacognition is practiced, we move from that emphasis on assessment *of* learning towards an emphasis on assessment that promotes more, deeper learning. The focus is then on what Stiggins and Chappuis (2012) call assessment *for* learning.

### The experiences

Different strategies and tools can be used to promote metacognition, depending on specific characteristics of the learners and the learning settings. What follows is a description of two strategies used to promote metacognition in two graduate level courses delivered online. The adult learners in the course are educators, mainly school teachers, principals, assistant principals, and coaches. The first strategy is a self- assessment activity that includes an assignment, a rubric, and personal reflections. The activity is given at the beginning of the term to offer students the opportunity to transfer the metacognitive strategies to upcoming assignments.

The first assignment of the term includes two sections. In the first section, the students write a paper on learning achievemen. In the second section, the students analyze their paper using an analytical rubric that describes clear expectations for each component of the assignment. The students highlight each component they see in their assignment on the rubric, add the points, and give themselves a grade. They are encouraged to make the changes needed to improve their paper. In addition, they have to write a reflection on the process of using the rubric for self-assessment. Guiding questions scaffold “students’ monitoring their understanding, predicting their performance, deciding what else they need to know, organizing and reorganizing ideas, checking for consistency between different pieces of information” Earl (2014, p. 36.).

This strategy has been implemented for the last four terms. When describing the process of assessing and improving their assignment, 100 % of students’ reactions were positive. The students used expressions such as “After using the rubric I am sure I included everything I had to include”; “I feel confident”; “The rubric was very helpful in guiding me through completing the

assignment.” As a consequence of participating in this activity, most of the students used rubrics to self- assess the rest of the assignments in the course. In addition, the grade for the assignment shows significant improvement since the implementation of this metacognitive strategy took place. The term before implementation, the average grade for this assignment was 60%. In the terms in which the strategy was implemented, the average grade for the assignment fluctuated between 80 % and 92 %.

A second strategy used to promote metacognition is the analysis of feedback to set goals. This strategy is used in an online doctoral course with a similar student body. Upon completion of the first assignment for the course, students receive descriptive feedback on the content of the paper and on their writing, as well as a rubric that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment. Then students are offered the opportunity to complete an optional activity for extra credit, which consists of analyzing the descriptive feedback received for the assignment and for assignments in other courses. After identifying patterns, students set goals to improve their academic writing and share those goals in a blog entry. Using Sharkwrites, a repository of resources for writing, students identify online writing resources that could be instrumental in meeting their goals. At the end of the term, students revisit the goal and, after reading the instructor’s feedback for the last three assignments of the course, they assess the extent to which their goals were met. Students also reflect on their experience with goal setting.

This optional strategy has been implemented for four semesters, and the response rate has ranged between 50 % and 80 %. Of those student who chose to set goals, 100 % completed the second part (assessing their goals) and all of them shared positive reactions to the activity. In addition to reflecting on the extent to which their goals were met, some students stated that they are more aware of their weaknesses as writers and other students showed evidence of transferring this metacognitive strategy to other academic spheres or new tasks. Examples of students’ reflections are: “...I also noticed that I became more aware of this frequent grammatical error;” “This goal will be used for future assignments;” “Overall, setting a writing goal did improve my writing;” “Because of setting this writing goal, I find that I am also now looking at other ways on how I can improve my writing. I now realize that I need to also set a goal to master the APA format, especially the reference page. I plan on attending one of the APA workshops at the library so I can receive some assistance in this area.”

#### Conclusions:

These experiences illustrate how creating opportunities for students to reflect on their learning products helps them succeed on their specific task and extends their metacognitive skills beyond the specific given task by engaging in metacognitive processes that are transferred to different learning situations.

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**Title:** An Innovative Way to Integrate Online Education for Health Care Students During the Clinical Year of Training.

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### **Important and Interesting:**

The online forum affords students the opportunity to teach and learn a variety of topics to one another utilizing evidence based medicine principles. The opportunity allows students to develop a love for lifelong learning by integrating evidence based medicine information into real life learning experiences.

### **Introduction:**

The application of evidence based medicine (EBM) principles is limited in the didactic year of learning in health care professional programs. Although professional health care students are exposed to courses that teach about the relevance of evidence based medicine principles, rarely are the students able to put their knowledge to practice. The practice of allowing the students to apply their medical knowledge to real life health problems allows them to better understand the reasons why certain principles are applied to medical practice. Online integration of different learning exercises will allow the students to develop medical knowledge relevant to clinical practice (El Madaaw, 2009).

### **Narrative body:**

The “two feet” method is known as integrating evidence based medicine and values based medicine (VBM) principles in order to make the best clinical decisions. It is important to understand how the values pertaining to patient evaluation and treatment may be interpreted, but it is equally as important to understand how to utilize the evidence that is found in the literature to conclude with reliable outcomes (Pelle, 2013). Historically, in the 1960s, professions such as the nursing profession was regarded only as an applied science. In the mid-1990s, it was noted that nurses led inter-professional teams from integrating the medical knowledge into systems based practice that produced outcomes. Looking beyond the facts, brought the medical team into reviewing improved quality, systems processes, and patient outcomes (Stevens, 2013).

The online forum is similar to the platform that is used in doctoral programs where students that are taking a similar course are able to collaborate on the same topics. Students are able to act not only as the student, but they will also act as a teacher. Different activities such as reading an evidence based medicine article and interpreting it, performing an exercise and elaborating on how it has been useful to the students’ learning experiences, or the opportunity to discuss an interesting case that was seen in the clinic may be discussed. The students in the same cohort have an opportunity to respond to at least two students’ write ups.

### **Conclusion:**

Allowing students to participate in a forum where they are able to bridge the gap between what they know (from the classroom) to what they do (in the clinic) will allow them to develop better critical thinking skills (Stevens, 2013). The skills that they will learn on the online forum will allow them to become more polished clinicians that will practice medical care on a best practices

level. They will develop a love for lifelong learning, where they will not be satisfied with what others do even if it does not make sense. The students will practice medical principles at a higher level, a level that is backed by evidence based principles, not just value based principles.

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# **Teaching Qualitative Research Online: Using Technology to Leverage Student Engagement**

Elda Veloso, PhD

Jennifer Reeves, PhD

## **Introduction**

Research indicates that instructional skills, learning objectives, and leaning styles that ought to be present in a traditional face-to-face classroom are also crucial for achieving mastery in an online environment (McFarlane, 2014). Teaching the skills online can be challenging because of the negative connotation associated with math and science in general. However, research is an essential part of teaching as it impacts practice. Teachers need to learn research-based strategies in order to influence their teaching. The problem is that if these strategies are presented to them in a complex matter, it takes away the context, analytic rigor, and ability to learn the important qualities of research.

Although research doesn't allow for much deviation, it still can allow for creativity and enthusiasm. In addition, research also indicates that creating online communities and integrating innovative technological tools are an effective way to increase student engagement and enthusiasm especially with subject matter that requires methodical learning (Chen, Lambert, & Guidry, 2010; Diemer, Fernandez, & Streepley, 2012; Nelson Laird & Kuh, 2005; Prince, 2004; Schrum & Glassett, 2009). Although there are many resources available on how to design online communities and increase student engagement, very few resources outline methods to incorporate these skills while teaching research online. Thus, we decided to pilot this concept of creating an online community and integrating innovative tools in a qualitative research course.

## **What We Did**

We started by looking at one of the course outcomes and the activity that matched with that outcome: "students will learn and apply how to conduct qualitative data collection and analysis." We created an online community outside the course using Google Plus as our platform. We created activities that connected with the course outcome and asked the students to complete the following activities: "students will conduct a qualitative interview/ Observation, transcribe it, and code it."

The focus was on learning data collection skills using innovative technological tools as a guide. We created a series of initial discussion questions to foster this process and posted them within the online learning community: (a) Identify, post, and reflect on several data collection methods used in qualitative research such as, observation, interviews, focus groups, content analysis, etc.; (b) Research and post about innovative qualitative tools that enable researchers to conduct qualitative data collection; (c) Explain in detail what the tools were and how to use them; and (d) Choose a data collection method and a tool (posted by you or one of your classmates), reflect on the tool, and identify how you will use it. Students were encouraged to provide responses and recommendations to their peers on that process.

Students began their research and posted their technology tools online; they gave their feedback on how to use the tools and what the tools would be used for. Discussions were encouraged to

evaluate the tools and give positive feedback on whether or not it was feasible for qualitative research data collection.

Last, the students conducted the interviews or observations using one of the tools posted in the online learning community. They were required to post the instrument used to collect data (e.g., interview guide, observation protocol) and the corresponding transcript. Students were asked to review and critique the interview as well as the tool they chose, and post recommendations and feedback to their peers. Students were then given feedback by their professor.

Finally, students were asked to analyze the transcripts; code the data; present the results using GoTo Meeting, a videoconferencing platform; and post the results on the discussion board. Feedback was given to each student. Finally, we asked students to assess the learning community platform by posting their thoughts/ recommendations on the use of the innovative tools and the online learning community. The tools that were chosen were as follows:

### ***Data collection apps***

#### **[Interview Assistant](#)**

This application (app) can be used to guide the interviewer through the interview process. The interview guide can be uploaded with probing questions to guide the interview process. The app allows you to create and organize question prompts, create interviewee profiles, use preset question templates, take text and audio notes, utilize the embedded calendar for planning interviews, attach photos and videos, and integrate seamlessly with Dropbox.

#### **[Observation 360](#)**

This app will allow you to log each observation and choose which codes you want to assign to the observation to record the data. Following the completion of the observations, it will provide you with the results in a data table. The app allows digital observations and evaluations, can be used with the iPhone and iPad, and has the ability to create reports based on observation data.

### ***Data recording apps***

#### **[iTalk Recorder](#)**

#### **[Dragon Dictation](#)**

**[These apps are designed for voice recording and recognition. They also have a play back option and the ability to translate many different Languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish.](#)**

### ***Data analysis apps***

#### **[Dedoose](#)**

This is a cross-platform app for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, photos, audio, videos, spreadsheet data, and more.

### ***Multiuse apps***

#### **[MAXApp – MAXQDA Mobile App](#)**

#### **[ATLAS.ti Mobile](#)**

These data collection and coding companion software apps can be used for qualitative data analysis. These apps can be used on an iPad or iPhone to record photos, audio, and video. These apps have the ability to edit text, documents, and memos, which is very valuable when recording interviews for qualitative data. In addition, the user can also assign, segment, and code the data; then transfer it via Dropbox or iTunes in order to analyze the data. These applications allow the user to text documents, pictures, video, and audio. The user can also code the data with text codes or emoticons. These apps are innovative for analyzing qualitative data.

## **Discussion**

Feedback from students was very positive. Although they were displeased and reluctant at first to do the extra work, they realized very quickly how the tools will save them time collecting data for their dissertations. They also enjoyed learning about other tools from their classmates. Students were clearly more engaged as a result of the innovative approach to teaching qualitative research online.

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Best Practices in Online Learning

April, 2016

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Authentication: Protecting the Integrity of Academic Online Programs through Student Identity  
Verification

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## **Abstract**

We assume that the students participating in our online courses are actually the ones who registered, and those receiving credit and degrees from our institution. Well, are they? Today, the possibilities for cheating in the virtual classroom far surpass the old copy-and-paste and plagiarism methods of cheating. Institutions are faced with high-tech cheating, which means we must step up our student identity authentication procedures to protect the academic integrity of our distance education programs. In order to provide all students -distant and local- with equivalent learning experiences (to have expectations of equivalent outcomes), we need to focus not only on the quality instruction but also on the assessment aspect of the equation. There are behavioral and software-based strategies that can help institutions verify student identity in distance education programs at the time of assessment, including securing the services of proctoring companies. Implementation of those strategies involve considerations related to the centralization of a remote proctoring model, including monetary costs, project management, privacy and security issues, and establishment of school-wide policies for consistency.

## Authentication: Protecting the Integrity of Academic Online Programs through Student Identity Verification

Can we really be sure that no one is cheating in the classroom? Is any security ever “fool-proof”? We’ve all heard stories of cheating creativity in the face-to-face classroom: notes inside baseball caps, math formulas glued to soda bottle labels, and so many other tales. Well, can this happen also online? Every cheating strategy in the face-to-face classroom can be adapted to cheating in the online classroom, with one aggravating detail, the Internet amplifies the availability of cheating options (Kasprzak & Nixon, 2004; Trenholm, 2007).

Two of NSU’s core values are academic excellence and integrity (Nova Southeastern University, 2016). We want to offer students the best possible learning experience while complying with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) guidelines for accreditation, for which we need to verify the identity of the student participating in our distance education courses (SACS, 2012). And while we are at it, we want to determine if our students actually learned what we taught them, while reducing (or eliminating) cheating in remotely administered programs.

How are we faring? Are we conferring a degree to someone who never actually attended classes, but instead, paid someone to impersonate them in our distance education courses? How do we know if ghostwriters are impersonating our students during tests, or even during the whole semester (Barnes & Paris, 2013; Netter, 2010)? This concern with academic dishonesty and the relative anonymity and separation between instructor and student in distance education courses has been addressed for decades (Ribble, 2011; Rimer, 2003; Shyles, 2002; Sims, 1993; Trenholm, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Varvel, 2005).

Usually, when we think about offering the best possible learning experience to students, both online and face-to-face, we consider preparing for instruction, content presentation, opportunities for practice, assessment, and follow-up and transfer of knowledge (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2009). This presentation will focus on assessment in online courses, and how students’ identity verification and reducing cheating directly affect the trustworthiness of our assessment methods and, ultimately, our institution’s reputation.

### **Creative Ways to Cheat**

As puzzling as it may seem, ghostwriter (or avatar) services are overtly advertised on the Internet. Although there is variation among the websites, services advertised by online brokers include completing online assignments, taking online exams, writing term papers, and/or taking entire courses on behalf of students. Fees vary, depending upon the amount of work required, and increase according to the workload involved, or even the grade desired. Some examples of websites acting as brokers between students willing to pay and ghostwriters include: Academic Ghostwriting (<http://www.academicghostwriting.com/>); BoostMyGrade (<http://www.boostmygrade.com/>); NoNeedToStudy (<https://www.noneedtostudy.com/myclass/take-online/>); WeTakeYourClass (<https://www.takeyourclass.com/>); and AceMyAssignment (<http://acemyassignment.com/>), among others (Fisher, McLeod, Savage, & Simkind, 2016).

Of course nothing is fail-safe, as we are dealing with the human factor. However, there are some things we can do, such as require students to turn in assignments through Turnitin.com

to make sure that they have not been copied from material previously posted on the Internet. However, Turnitin (or similar software) will not flag an original paper written by a ghostwriter, specifically for a particular course. So the problem persists as that paper will not be flagged as plagiarized, but it will also not be a paper written by the actual student. We can also install software such as Respondus Lockdown Browser in our computer labs, which prevents students from opening a new Internet tab while taking the test, but what about those students who take the test from home?

### **Behavior, Software, or Both**

Before considering some behavioral and software-based strategies, let's start by pointing out that the more equivalent the learning experiences of distant and local students are, the more equivalent the outcomes of the learning experience will be (Simonson, 1999). We also should aspire to maintain a similar degree of academic rigor in both distant and face-to-face courses (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2012).

So how can we eliminate cheating in distance education courses? Let's consider some behavioral strategies, and then some software-based solutions. Some behavioral strategies include designing open-book type of tests, or asking questions that require students to apply and synthesize information, rather than recalling information (Bloom, 1956). Or we can always quiz students orally (synchronously) using a webcam, if our schedule allows it. Now, if we ask students to submit assignments asynchronously, and then we assign a grade, what prevents them from hiring a ghostwriter to write those assignments for them? If they do, as mentioned earlier, software like Turnitin or LockDown Browser will not help. So we may ask students to submit assignments asynchronously (so they have enough time to work on the paper, research the topic appropriately, and turn in a good quality submission), but then we may want to follow-up by double-checking that the student actually wrote the paper.

Ideally, instructors would hold a synchronous virtual session with each student individually and quiz each student orally, face-to-face (through a webcam) to be assured that the student knows the material. However, in the real world, one approach is to require a short-answer proctored exam as a follow-up to submitted assignments, in which the instructor asks questions that allow students to prove that they are actually the same students who attended classes or authored an assignment (the instructor may also ask content-related questions at that time). For example, the instructor may ask follow-up questions aimed at determining if the student actually wrote a paper (i.e.: "what made you choose this particular theory to base your analysis on?" or "of the different authors discussed in the lecture, which one do you agree with and why?"). Or a science professor who taught a class on camouflage and, in his recorded lecture, he showed a picture of a beige dog on a beige couch and another picture of a colorful fish blending with a colorful coral under the ocean, may ask "what were some pictures used in the lecture as examples of the concept of camouflage?". If the student enrolled in the course paid a science major to take the exam for him, the science major may be knowledgeable about the concept of camouflage, but will likely not know about the particular photograph used in the lecture, so he will not be able to answer correctly. Other options would be to offer multiple-choice (or other types of computer-graded, lower-order-thinking tests) to be taken under the watchful eye of a proctor. Finally, related considerations include deciding what percentage of the grade will be assigned to each individual submission and to the proctored exam. If the instructor suspects foul play, the next step would be to refer to existing guidelines for appropriate consequences.

## **How the Technology Works**

Many proctoring companies offer proctoring solutions. Most of these “watch” students take an exam and they all authenticate student identity online, but they go about it in different ways. Some proctoring companies, such as ProctorU, offer live human proctoring in a synchronous fashion through the use of a webcam (ProctorU Inc., 2016). Others offer live human proctoring services in an asynchronous mode, such as “Remote Proctor Now,” by having certified proctors review a webcam recording of the student taking the exam after the exam has been completed (Software Secure, 2016). Others, such as “Proctortrack,” offer proctorless services, in which an automated system produces a report of suspected violations (Verificent Technologies, Inc., 2014); and there are many more.

Before the exam, most proctoring companies authenticate the student identity through the use of a webcam, requesting answers to identity verification questions (such as previous home addresses, or make/models of cars previously owned by the student), and some even feature face recognition software and/or knuckle scans. Once the student identity has been authenticated, the proctor conducts a room scan, provides the student with the rules of the particular exam, enters the exam password (without giving the password to the student) and the student is allowed to take the exam while being watched and recorded by a proctor.

During the exam, proprietary systems are used to flag suspicious or inappropriate behaviors (some can even detect Google searches on the content from cell phones or other portable devices). Then, during or after the exam (depending on the proctoring company) video recordings of the student taking the exam are reviewed by certified proctors. In case of an integrity violation, the software generates a digital report. The report includes the actual video and audio of the violation instances, and the proctoring company delivers the report to the faculty member or the administration. At that point, the faculty or administration will determine what consequences should result from the inappropriate behavior.

At the time of making a choice, we need to consider which of the available proctoring services best matches the conditions we need met, or which one better resembles the live experience of standing there, watching students take a test in person.

## **What Steps do Faculty and Students Need to Take?**

Before the semester begins, faculty must let students know about the proctoring requirement, including “any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity” (SACS, 2012, p. 40). They also need to make students aware of the requirement to have a webcam, a computer microphone, and a stable Internet connection in order to participate in a distance education course that requires proctored exams. Also, faculty have to communicate with the proctoring provider and indicate the details associated with the proctored exam: how long will the test be, what is the password for the exam, whether students can use notes, whether the exam will be open-or closed-book, and any other applicable information. Finally, the instructor (or an instructional designer) have to upload the exam to the institution’s learning management system (LMS) (e.g. Blackboard Learn, Canvas, Moodle, etc.). One idea to make faculty lives easier is to have a syllabus clause that faculty can copy and paste into their syllabus. This practice eliminates guesswork and provides consistent information across courses and departments. During the semester, faculty (or faculty with school administrators) review any violation reports provided by the proctoring company, and determine appropriate consequences.

Also, faculty should remind students to schedule a convenient date and time to take the exam (within the dates that the exam will be available in the LMS) with the proctoring company. Finally, faculty should provide the proctoring coordinator with a report of violation instances, steps taken as a consequence, and other relevant information that can help improve the procedures related to proctoring practices.

In order for students to have their exams proctored, they need to make sure they have the required hardware and software (i.e. a webcam, a microphone, and sufficient bandwidth). Students also have to register and schedule a convenient date and time to take the exam with the proctoring company. Most proctoring companies have appointments available around the clock, making it very convenient for students with different schedules and responsibilities. Before the date of the exam, students should test their hardware and software through a test link provided by the proctoring company, using the same computer they will use at the time of the exam. This way they can make sure there are no connectivity issues, and have the chance to address any issues that may arise beforehand. On the day of the exam, before the test starts, students have to demonstrate who they are, and follow certain instructions. Then they are provided the rules of the particular exam, and once their identity has been authenticated, they are allowed to take the exam using the proctoring solution. During the exam itself, the proctoring company records the student through the student's webcam (video and audio) and the system creates a video of everything the student does and sees on his or her computer desktop.

In short, it's a fairly simple process for faculty and for students. Faculty have to create the exam, direct students to contact the proctoring company to schedule the exam and gain access, and review any reports and recordings that are generated in case of violations from students. For students, it involves having or acquiring the necessary hardware and software, registering to take the exam, and testing the system ahead of time to address any connectivity issues.

### **Considerations of Implementing a Centralized Remote Proctoring Model**

The proctoring solution should offer security, scalability, and convenience. Adopting the right proctoring solution can help an institution offer programs that are not just campus based, but also online based. Also, faculty and administration gain an increased sense of exam security, whether in face-to-face or online courses, as this can be used for all courses, regardless of modality (Gartner, 2015). A proctoring solution also frees faculty's time to focus on course content and delivery, and relieves them from the burden of having to preoccupy themselves with policing students as they take exams. Other advantages of implementing a centralized model for remote proctoring have to do with reaping the benefits of all the available tools, cultivating a culture of academic integrity, and expanding online programs, while protecting the value of the degree conferred. Adopting an institutional approach to this process would also mean getting the advantage of discounts associated with volume. The lower cost of an institutional license means schools do not pass onto students the higher cost of "pay-as-you-go" models.

At the same time, it is important to understand all the implications involved. Some considerations when choosing a proctoring company include: project management; FERPA compliance (security of student records); knowledge and certifications of proctors; reliability of the method used to review potential violations (e.g., Will a dog barking cause the system to generate a "false positive" report?); and availability, accuracy, and timeliness of reports from the proctoring company, to name a few. It is important to establish robust communication strategies between the institution and the proctor-solution company, so management of the proctoring

initiative doesn't fall on the shoulders of individual faculty. School-wide policy provides more consistent enforcement (closed-book restriction? using text-book during exam?) and allows for establishment of clear and consistent exam policy guidelines. Ideally, the institution should appoint a team or a department to act as a liaison, not only to make sure that relationships are maintained and effectiveness is maximized, but also to have project management built-in, in order to relieve the burden of proctoring from faculty. Also, there should be a resource web page for faculty with instructions on how to set up their proctoring account, view reports, set up one-on-one training sessions when needed, or implement best practices to ensure success. In terms of support for students, the institution should provide a resource web page featuring a student guide, information about where to call/go for help, and what to do if they encounter issues (usually 24/7 support). Finally, there are FERPA related aspects (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) of implementing a centralized proctoring solution, such as student records and privacy. It is key to know how the proctoring company handles, stores, and distributes student data, who gets access to the data, and the reasons why certain departments or entities are getting the data, considering how sensitive this information is. Also, the proctoring company should have a data recovery plan to which vendor partners adhere.

### **Conclusion**

This presentation focused on the idea of protecting the integrity of our academic programs through curbing cheating in online exams, while adding another layer of identity authentication through both software solutions and behavioral strategies. It pointed out the reasons why we need to reinforce student identity authentication in distance education courses. Some of those reasons include adhering to NSU's core values of academic excellence and integrity and protecting the integrity of our academic programs by complying with SACS requirements for proctored examinations, student identity verification in distance education programs, and written disclosures at the time of student enrollment. The discussion considered various cheating techniques, the availability of ghostwriting services advertised on the web, and some available strategies to reduce cheating, including software-based solutions and behavioral strategies based on sound pedagogical practices. Different forms of proctoring solutions were described, along with the use of well-established software titles aimed at detecting plagiarism and restricting students' access to browsing the web at the time of taking an exam. This presentation also listed steps that faculty and students need to take when using a proctoring solution, and addressed the need to provide all students -distant and local- with equivalent learning experiences (if we are to have expectations of equivalent outcomes), and to focus not only on the instruction, but also on the assessment aspect of the equation. Finally, it discussed considerations related to implementing an institutional remote proctoring model, including monetary costs, project management, privacy and security issues, and establishment of school-wide policies for consistency.

As an institution, we are only as good as our "lowest common denominator," meaning that when our students go out to the world with a degree bearing our name, their knowledge and ability to function ethically and effectively in the professional world reflects our ability to properly prepare students. We want to make sure our graduates are knowledgeable, and for that we need appropriate assessment in both face-to-face and online courses.

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