Making Blended Learning Truly “Blended”

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Outline

• Presenters’ background
• What is a blended/hybrid course?
• Institutional involvement
• Blended benefits
• Seamless transition
• Costs of blended courses
• Benefits revisited
• Things to take away
Presenters’ Prior Experience

- 8 blended courses:
- Ware taught blended courses Summers 05-07, Fall 06, 07
- Stuck did blended courses Summers 06 and 07, Fall 06
- Graduate work in Instructional Development – Syracuse University (Ware)
Your Ideas …

• What is a blended/hybrid course?
• Is it different from a web-assisted course?
What IS an hybrid course?

• A hybrid course is a blend of face-to-face instruction with online learning. In a hybrid course, a significant part of the course learning is online and as a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced.
  California State University Long Beach

• "Hybrid" is the name commonly used nationwide to describe courses that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with computer-based learning. Hybrid courses move a significant part of course learning online and, as a result, reduce the amount of classroom seat time.
  University of Wisconsin Hybrid Course Project

• (http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/ocotillo/hybrids/what.php)
Audience Involvement

• Why would you want to do a blended course? (Or why are you doing a blended course?)

• On what basis would you “split” a blended course?

• Why?
Institutional input ...

- SUNY Oswego: only 1/3 of a blended course may be on line
- No training for blended (but much for totally online)… Instructional Developer available for “help”
- Consequences….???

- SUNY Cortland: has no “rules” governing the balance on on-line and face to face in an hybrid course
- Little, if any, training -- one instructional developer shared by all faculty users
Course Design

- Technology competencies: faculty & students
- Goals & objectives
- Substantive content
- Learning activities
Course Design: Technological Competencies Issues

• Faculty may be less tech competent than some students!

• Dynamic changes in software

• Students w/o competencies procrastinate – put off doing software and/or course orientation

• Students w/some prior experience with DL don’t familiarize themselves with YOUR design, software, etc.
Course Design-Substantive, Difficulties

FACULTY

• Immediate use of online component required (access syllabus, etc.)

• Online discussion following 1st face-to-face

STUDENTS

• Students don’t do this; ability to expect readings completed for next class compromised

• Students haven’t gone into the online course yet to do anything
Course Design-Substantive, Difficulties

FACULTY

• Expectation of online discussion by all

• Expectation of response to others’ postings

STUDENTS

• Students who claim the need for body language, and facial expressions in discussion

• Students who only respond to the opening discussion prompt (as in F2F)
Learning Activities

FACULTY

- Students must see a connection between F2F and online (implies more work for faculty in design)
- Because of online component, a chance for different types of learning activities (more work for faculty in design)

STUDENTS

- Students who refuse to "get it" -- the seamless nature of the course
- Students’ different learning styles can be addressed
Blended course benefits: Pedagogical

- Allows/requires student work outside of class (more efficient use of time)
- Allows many different modalities of learning
- Allows everyone to be heard (discussion assignments)
- Depending on design, allows “real time” addition of materials from “current events”
Blended course benefits: Pedagogical, Cont’d.

- Depending on design, real time modifications to assignments
- Continuous contact with students (via discussions, announcements, mail, etc.)
- Feedback on assignments (easier to read than handwritten comments)
Blended course benefits: Institutional

- Perceived availability of brick & mortar classroom space during on-line portions of courses
- Class meetings can be “held” when weather cancels classes (both our institutions are in areas with very difficult winters)
- Enrollment management benefits: Students may enroll in blended courses when they might not sign up for a face to face (summer vacation; winter break; winter semester) because of perceived “flexibility” of time or freedom from commuting
Audience Discussion

• The ideal is “seamless” transition …

• What does this mean to you?
• Is it possible?
• How to achieve it?
SOC/WST 250

• Attempts at seamless blended course

• (Web-assisted: www.oswego.suny.sln.edu)
Audience Discussion

- “Costs” of seamless blended courses
- Benefits of seamless blended courses
- Benefits to F2F courses from attempts at developing hybrids?
“Costs” of seamless blended courses

- Faculty workload increase
- Student workload increase
- All assignments on line, loss of vehicle to learn students’ names
- Grade distribution compared to other semesters
Things to “take away”

• Collaboration helps – in designing courses and in improving them
• Training for hybrids is critical – substantive and technological – for both students and faculty
• “Social presence” and “community” can be lacking in Hybrid courses unless specifically planned for
• Students may react positively to one aspect of an hybrid course, and react negatively to the other (e.g., the parts may not be seamless to students)
Benefits Revisited

• Allows/requires student work outside of class (more efficient use of time)
• Allows possibility of many different modalities of learning
• Allows insertion of “current events” into class
• Allows everyone to be heard (discussion assignments)
• May foster total rethinking of course to be delivered as hybrid
Resources


- “Hybrid Courses – Hidden Dangers?” Distance Education 8 No 7 (2004): 3-6.
Resources Cont’d.


• Oblender, Thomas E. “A Hybrid Course Model: One Solution to the High Online Drop-Out Rate.” Learning & Leading With Technology 29 No 6 (2002): 42-46
Resources Cont’d.


Community of Inquiry

• Ideal dynamics of any course involving a distance component:

Community of Inquiry with

✓ Cognitive Presence
✓ Teaching Presence
✓ Social Presence
Figure 1: Community of Inquiry