# The Changing Role of Faculty

**Graham Shaw**
*Barry University, USA*

## INTRODUCTION

The role of faculty within traditional teaching institutions worldwide has always been multidimensional, involving administrative duties, research responsibilities, and a commitment to community service in addition to teaching. In the majority of institutions, this teaching role of faculty has remained unchanged for decades; in fact, most faculty teach the way they themselves were taught using the tried and trusted transmission paradigm in which sections of academic content are divided into 50-minute lectures and delivered to often large groups of passive recipients. There is simply very little incentive to make alterations to a teaching model that has been in place for hundreds of years (Buckley, 2002). Present-day faculty culture often values research productivity and quality over high-quality teaching, and student evaluations tend not to reward faculty prepared to experiment and take risks with models of learning that differ from the students' previous learning experiences.

Things may just be about to change, and the days when "chalk and talk" is used as the primary means of content delivery may soon be replaced at some institutions by more collaborative, interactive approaches to learning that are supported by the numerous recent innovations in computer technology.

## BACKGROUND

The growth in distance education, online courses, and computer-based learning promises to add a new dimension to the role of faculty and serve as a catalyst for a change in learning paradigm. This explosion in computer-supported education is being driven in part by the increasing demand from the expanding number of "tech-savvy" students in the education system. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), 56% of all two-year and four-year Title-IV-eligible degree-granting institutions offered distance education courses in the academic year 2000 to 2001, with a further 12% indicating that they plan to offer distance education courses in the next three years. A recent survey of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2003) revealed that over 1.6 million students took at least one online course during Fall 2002, and this number is projected to increase by 19.8% to include 1.9 million students by 2003. These students are part of the computer-gaming generation, continually on the move, often only finding time for study between social and sporting activities. For this generation, to be out of touch, to be disconnected from their community of friends and families, is simply "uncool." Not surprisingly, these students have high technological expectations of their faculty. Furthermore, in the new millennium, the number of nontraditional students returning to education either full time or part time is increasing as distance education programs become more successful at marketing their products (Carnevale & Olsen, 2003). These nontraditional students return to education after raising a family or are seeking additional qualifications and professional development opportunities whilst holding down a permanent job, lured by the increased flexibility that online programs have to offer. Having more life experience, these students are often more mature, more demanding, more focused, and more highly motivated than students on a more traditional, linear educational path (observations confirmed by Dutton, Dutton, & Perry, 2002). They benefit most from a learning model that is increasingly flexible and can accommodate outside commitments. The expansion of computer-based learning may also be driven by institutional pressure to increase students' educational opportunities and at the same time bring in more revenue by removing the limitations of bricks and mortar, thereby allowing for unlimited class sizes. However, the thinking that online learning is cheaper for the institution than the traditional para-

digm is a widespread misconception and seriously flawed. Institutions may even embark on a computer-based learning adventure for no other reason than not to be left behind by others. In fact, today the education marketplace is becoming increasingly congested with private institutions, for-profit universities, and corporate giants competing with public institutions for market share.

## GROWTH OF COMPUTER-BASED LEARNING

In this era of "borderless higher education" (Cunningham et al., 2000), 81% of all institutions of higher education worldwide currently offer at least one online or blended course, and 67% of all institutions envisage that online learning is critical to their long-term institutional strategy (Allen & Seaman, 2003). Though not all ventures into the highly volatile international computer-based learning arena have been successful, and there are many high-profile failures, a number of institutions are currently attracting international recognition for the high quality of their online provision (Carnevale & Olsen, 2003). These include the Open University of Great Britain, DeVry Inc., the University of Central Florida, the University of Phoenix (now with campuses throughout Europe, serving over 63,000 online students), Sylvan Learning Systems Inc. (with the recently acquired Universidad Europa of Madrid, Spain), and the University of Maryland University College, ranked by Forbes magazine as one of the "Top 20 Cyber-Universities" (Heeger, 2000). Cardean University, a for-profit institution, is building a reputation for offering high-quality business courses online and has established links with a number of internationally respected institutions such as the London School of Economics. The number of courses offered online by the State University of New York has grown from eight in 1995 to 1996 to over 3,200 in 2002 to 2003, with enrollment in online courses increasing from 119 to over 50,000 students over the same time frame (Shea, Pickett, & Pelz, 2003a). The world campus of Penn State offered four programs and enrolled 41 students at inception in 1998, and in 2003 is expected to have annual enrollments of 10,000 students in 300 courses (Kusch, 2001). Govern-

ment-supported ventures into the higher education market are also occurring. These include the e-universities worldwide project in the United Kingdom, and in Israel the Israeli Council for Higher Education has provided approximately $3.8 million to be used for the integration of IT into the curriculum (Guri-Rosenblit, 2002).

Closer inspection of some of the courses offered by institutions that are leading the computer-based distance education field reveals that simply transporting course content to the Internet without appropriate pedagogic review is unlikely to be successful. In general, the computer-based online course offerings at these leading institutions are characterized by an approach to learning that adheres to the seven principles of good practice advocated by Chickering and Gamson (1987). These principles, originally advocated for the traditional learning model, have been subsequently revisited to accommodate the advances in computer-based learning technologies (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996). Furthermore, online course design at the leading institutions reflects an appreciation for how students learn in this lean environment (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

## THE ROLE OF FACULTY

In this rapidly evolving educational climate, a new breed of faculty is beginning to emerge that is ready to embrace technological innovations wherever they appear and is competent to teach whatever the medium. These are the innovators, the entrepreneurs, the lone rangers (Buckley, 2002) of the teaching profession. This group of faculty is composed of creative, innovative, enthusiastic "new hires" familiar with technology, as well as more experienced faculty with an interest in technology seeking new challenges and dedicated to the pursuit of lifelong learning. The enthusiasm and energy of this first group is a precious commodity indeed and should not be blunted by excessive administrative duties and pressure to seek research funding to justify their new faculty position. The second group of more senior faculty on long-term contracts or tenured faculty has a wealth of experience obtained from teaching in a traditional paradigm that should be utilized to inform the development of new technologies in all areas of college life. This group of faculty

4 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/changing-role-faculty/12110](www.igi-global.com/chapter/changing-role-faculty/12110)

## Related Content

Online Collaborative Learning and Learning Styles
Tony Day (2005). *Encyclopedia of Distance Learning (pp. 1339-1347).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-collaborative-learning-learning-styles/12279

Aligning and Assessing Teaching Approaches With SOLO Taxonomy in a Computer Programming Course
Sohail Iqbal Malik, Ragad M. Tawafakand Mohanaad Shakir (2021). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/aligning-and-assessing-teaching-approaches-with-solo-taxonomy-in-a-computer-programming-course/273891

Cultural Conceptions of Flipped Learning: Examining Asian Perspectives in the 21st Century
Shannon Skelcher (2017). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 17-27).*
www.irma-international.org/article/cultural-conceptions-of-flipped-learning/187017

Identifying Key Stakeholders in Blended Tertiary Environments: Experts' Perspectives
Kimberley Tuapawa (2017). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 40-52).*
www.irma-international.org/article/identifying-key-stakeholders-in-blended-tertiary-environments/187019

An Online Virtual Laboratory of Electricity
J.A.G. Tejedor, G.M. Martínezand C.B. Vidaurre (2008). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (pp. 21-34).*
www.irma-international.org/article/online-virtual-laboratory-electricity/1723