

# Chapter XXVIII

## Shifting from Classroom to Online Delivery

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The rapid proliferation of e-learning tools that offer low or no cost investment and are not housed on institutional servers, has made it very attractive for faculty to move learning experiences online. Yet institutions are often unaware of the technology practices of instructors or learners, thereby investing time, effort, and funding into tools and infrastructure than may not be the best support for learning outcomes. This chapter describes shifts in the use of learning technologies, illustrates a high level overview for assessing current use and practice, and provides a framework for selecting delivery solutions and tools that can best support instructional goals.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Instructional technologies and new delivery models have changed the university classroom since the mid-1990s. Since that time, use of the Internet was becoming integrated into teaching, primarily through text-based access, and computers were becoming truly multi-media capable, while faculty members began creating course Web pages. The general adoption of technology,

however, was not universal and, for the higher education classroom, technology has not always been readily available or easily accessible. As we approach the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, access to technology for teaching and learning is almost ubiquitous and expectations regarding learning outcomes and student success of accrediting agencies, funding organizations, learners, and performance evaluators are high (Kobulnicky & Rudy 2002).

The authors believe that technology adoption and implementation must be driven by an appreciation and understanding of the learner as well as the instructor (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001). Faculty members are vested in the long-term success of the work of the university and their success and productivity is an indicator of a healthy institutional culture. Without participation and consideration of faculty practice, planning is limited at best, and short sighted at worst. The learner is equally important, however the learner is transitory, and therefore planning around current learners can result in poor infrastructure and other investments. The authors advocate ongoing, reflective, and iterative analysis of the use of instructional tools, instructional delivery models and support services to best capture the present status of what instructors and students are really doing. This provides an appreciation from which planning can commence.

The focus of this chapter is to present an overview of how institutions can best determine the needs of the instructor, and the learner, as they shift from the traditional classroom to online learning. Further, we provide a high-level overview of institutional assessment processes, strategies for determining current teaching and learning activities, support of instructors and learners, and frameworks for moving learning experiences to online environments. We conclude with a discussion about future trends for distributed learning and the probable impact on teaching and learning.

## **BACKGROUND**

Institutions and their faculty are faced with multiple challenges as they move forward in planning for five, ten, or even fifteen years. These include (McGee & Diaz, 2007):

- **The technology-adoption cycle:** Under ideal circumstances, a faculty member may

require anywhere from three to four terms to adopt a learning technology tool; even more time may be needed to produce positive results in teaching and learning. Many faculty members are hesitant to experiment with several tools at once and prefer a “one-at-a-time” approach to adoption and integration. The ever-changing array of available tools and the lack of information related to adoption and use together act as a de-motivator.

- **Lack of integrated technology tools:** Although course management systems (CMS) have become standard, many emerging tools are not easily integrated into the CMS. When isolated tools are added on to the CMS course, users are confronted with “multiple log-ins, data input, and results tracking. In other words, tools that are not centrally integrated require an additional “use and management” investment that is otherwise unnecessary. “
- **Learners’ changing expectations:** Students have different expectations, skills, abilities, and knowledge about the technology themselves and how the technologies should be best used in teaching and learning. Increasingly intergenerational issues segment classes and challenge a coherent use of technology.
- **Institutional changes to technology commitments:** Faculty members adopt technology at different rates in different ways. This adoption cycle is often at odds with, or even unconsidered, by the institutional adoption of technology. For faculty and students, the sudden or cyclical change of technology (such as upgrades in CMS) can appear as an unstable and unpredictable environment that results in dissonance and relearning, often contributing to the reluctance of faculty to adopt new technologies.

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