Chapter 15

EDM310:
A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This case study of EDM310 at the University of South Alabama covers the transition of the class from a group of face to face courses, which covered Microsoft Office, to face to face classes of 20 students taught by different teachers, which emphasized, to varying degrees, the use of Web 2.0 tools, blogging, commenting on blogs; then to a set of face to face courses all delivering instruction using Web 2.0 tools, blogs, and commenting on blogs. Finally the chapter discusses a course of 170 students taught by one faculty member with assistance from graduate and undergraduate students' course almost entirely on the Internet and in an open lab conducted by undergraduate assistants. A detailed description is provided, showing how projects are used as a central learning tool; how blogging and comments on blogs play a critical role in the course; how students react to these new instructional approaches. The case study also contains specific suggestions on how to organize such a course, and how it was implemented at the University of South Alabama with great success.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this book you have been reading about the key issues that surround the creation of technology-rich education programs. In this chapter I take you to a discussion of the develop-

ment and implementation of such a course at the University of South Alabama.

EDM310 is the only course offered by the College of Education to teach aspiring students the uses of technology in educational programs. When the course was added to the curriculum some 10 years ago, it offered instruction in basic computer use, word processing, presentation, spreadsheets

and databases. The proficient use of Microsoft Office was its primary objective.

Revisions to EDM310 began in 2007. More and more students were arriving from high school with the ability to use the Microsoft Office tools. Older students, often seeking recertification, needed a course that taught the basic skills necessary to operate a computer, as well as Microsoft Office. The differing needs of the students, as well as the emergence of Web 2.0 tools, led to EDM310 becoming a course for those already familiar with the use of computers and basic office tools. Students needing those skills and that knowledge were counseled to other courses in the University and nearby community colleges or commercial entities.

By 2008 students were blogging, using Skype, watching YouTube and other videos, making use of iTunes U, and mastering the transfer of the Office suite of tools to Google Docs. By the fall semester of 2009 EDM310 had become a face to face class covering new communication technologies and web 2.0 tools and approaches. It was taught by one professor and two Ph. D. graduate students under the general supervision of the faculty member. In the spring semester of 2010 efforts were begun to change EDM310 from a face to face course to what the University of South Alabama calls a *blended course*. A blended course can be any course that involves at least 20% but no more than 60% face to face instruction. In the summer of 2010 the first trial of EDM310 as a blended course took place. In the fall semester of 2010 the blended version of EDM310 was completely implemented as a single course of 170 students taught by one full time professor with the assistance of two Ph.D. graduate assistants and three undergraduate lab assistants. In the spring 2011 term the two graduate assistants were replaced with 1 ½ undergraduate assistants who had taken EDM310.

DISCLOSURE

EDM310 as it is currently offered at the University of South Alabama is largely my product. I initiated the efforts to change EDM310 beginning in 2007 continuing through its full implementation in the fall 2010 semester. I am primarily responsible for its objectives, design and content. I have been the lead instructor for EDM310 since the spring 2008 term. Although I reported frequently to the chair of my department on what I was doing with the course, I received no mandates, instructions, guidance or objections to what I was undertaking. I have received considerable help and ideas from many people including William Chamberlain, Dorothy Burt, Joe McClung, Jarod Lamshed, Alec Couros, G. Tashbin, Steve Sullivan, Anthony Capps, Jamie Lynn Miller and many EDM310 students. They deserve a great deal of credit for the successes of EDM310. I thank them for their help. Ultimately, however, I am responsible for the successes and failures of EDM310. I have a great deal of ownership in EDM310 as well as pride in how it has been implemented. So be cautious when you read what I have to say about EDM310. It is my baby and parents are often prejudiced when their children are discussed.

I share with you this case study because I am firmly convinced that the teachers of the future must be able to combine great instruction with the use of very powerful tools. It is my hope that this telling of the story of EDM310 will help others develop and implement their own courses that attempt to attain some or all the objectives that I seek. This is not like a "patent medicine chest where one can come and get a pill of wisdom to be swallowed like an aspirin" (Murrow, 1951) that will solve the problem of how to design and implement such a course. Rather, the EDM310 story can serve as a guidepost. Yes, it reveals much of what *I* believe about education, schools, technology, and learners. This is *my* story. This is what I believe. The intent of telling it is to help

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