CONTENT

I must begin by saying that my worries about online teaching are quickly disappearing, and I am starting to look forward to it. I think online teaching will fit me far better than I ever would have guessed. I know I will miss the in-person interaction with students, but I think the flexibility of the online course structure will let me build a course in a way I never could in a traditional environment.

One thing that immediately struck me as I was exploring the course website is the general structure of an online course, specifically the week-by-week organization of material as opposed to lecture-by-lecture or day-by-day. This completely makes sense: unless everybody is on a nearly perfectly synchronized schedule, it is necessary to lay out work in somewhat larger chunks that people can complete with greater flexibility, especially with regard to time.

One of my major misconceptions about online teaching which was quickly dispelled was the idea that one just takes classroom lectures and posts them as online videos to create much of the course content. I was very worried about creating a large number of lecture videos! I am quickly learning that there are other kinds of content which are much more suitable for building an online course. Some of my content will be very different from what is in this course, though, so while I can leverage many of the concepts being illustrated I will still need to learn how to teach hands-on activities remotely. Knot tying is a simple example, although in that specific case I am sure I can find good online content to work with. Activities like that which lack existing online content will be an area in which I will expect to develop my own content.

Another major misconception I had which was dispelled was that some form of interactive, real-time online discussion would be needed every week. I am developing a greater appreciation for the fact that everyone may be on a completely different schedule and it is not reasonable to expect that real-time group discussions can occur. I am also learning how class discussion will work. Given that I anticipate discussions in my class to address student-collected data, I am coming up with new ideas of how to approach that. Unlike the present course, I will need to be involved since there will be a teaching aspect to the discussions – so I will have to figure out a good way to lead or teach within those discussions.

Moving my focus to the reading and discussion of the week, the pros and cons of online learning were interesting to read. To me, perhaps the greatest issue is the idea that online students need to have already learned how to be a successful student before they can succeed in the online environment. I do not see this as any sort of fatal flaw with online learning (far from it), but rather as a key item which must be acknowledged and addressed in any responsible online education program. It is unfortunate that so many core and freshman classes seem to be getting pushed into an online model. There's no question that a prepared student could excel in that environment. However, institutions need to keep their responsibility to the student in mind. After all, isn't the purpose of a university to prepare a student for the world? And when we consider that key verb – prepare – well, what about preparing them for online learning by first welcoming them into a physical classroom for their formative college experiences?

At the positive end, I especially appreciate how online courses enable a greater variety of content to be brought to a greater variety of students. It would not be practical for me to teach the course I will be teaching this coming spring if it were a traditional course – but putting the course online opens up that opportunity.

One thing I am looking forward to learning, which has not come up yet, is how to measure student learning in the online environment. That is one of my big questions, particularly in the context of the course I will be teaching. I am certainly open to moving away from traditional quizzes and exams. I expect that the solution will be as eye-opening as class content and structure have already been for me.

I logged in early this week and fully participated in the discussion.

I met all standards this week: 95%