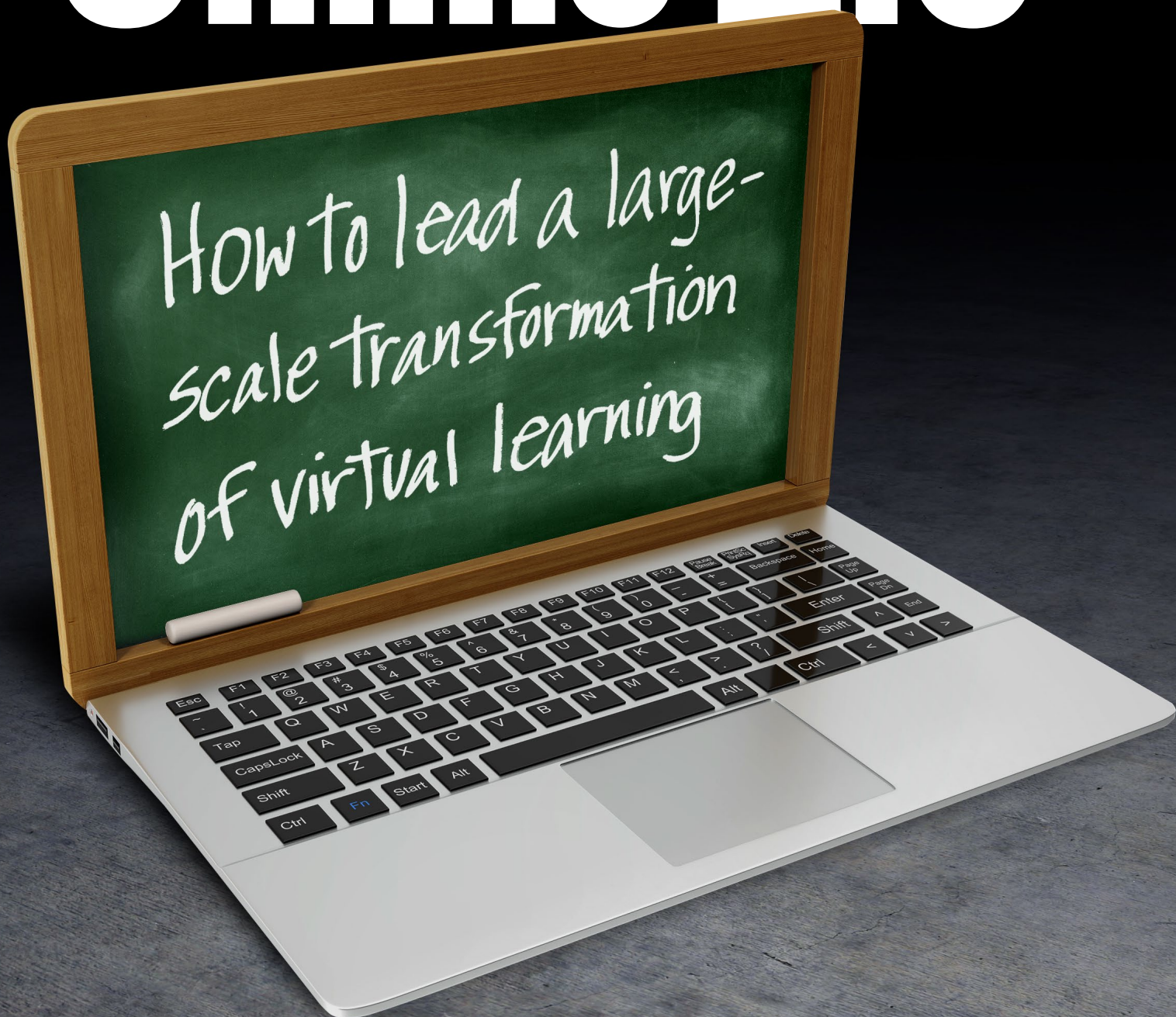


THE CHRONICLE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION®

Online 2.0



4

Section 1

Preparing for a Different Kind of Classroom

As colleges plan for the next academic year, so much is uncertain, including the continuing threat of Covid-19, the health of campus budgets, and the desire of students to enroll. Colleges will have to think strategically about how to train their professors to teach more effectively online, redesign course offerings, and decide which experiences absolutely must be done in person and which can be handled remotely. No matter what shape the semester takes, online learning will play a prominent role.

- *The Chronicle* Survey on Online Learning
 - Engage Your Faculty ■ Prepare Your Gateway Courses
 - Make the Most of the Internet ■ Think Creatively About What You Teach
 - Connect With Your Students ■ Lead a Good Online Discussion
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Online Learning: What Does the Research Say?

Numerous studies have evaluated whether online education can live up to the classroom experience. Research shows that it's how the material is delivered, not where.

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Faculty members and administrators describe what they learned this spring, and what they're planning for the fall.

- 5 Takeaways From My Covid-19 Remote Teaching
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Connect With Your Students

Professors often worry that if they teach online, they won't be able to forge meaningful connections with students. They're used to reading the energy in a classroom and bumping into their students on campus. Karen Costa has some good news: "It is absolutely possible to build positive, supportive, healthy online communities without ever being in the same room with our students."

Costa, an online-learning specialist who wrote *99 Tips For Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos*, knows this from years of experience. Here are some tactics she suggests:

- Building a relationship can sound daunting. So focus instead on making connections. Learning even simple details about one another — do you prefer hot dogs or hamburgers? — helps students succeed and makes instructors feel better about their teaching.
- Learning online can be isolating. To address that head-on, professors might make a video to introduce students to their courses. A colleague of Costa's recently shared one that included an appearance by her dog. "That's a perfect example of a humanizing approach," she says. If even that much personal

sharing feels uncomfortable, professors can instead connect by talking about what excites them about their disciplines.

- Give students a way to introduce themselves and to explain why they're in the class. As much as possible, use students' names. While it can be tough to do so in a large class, it goes a long way.

Costa also notes that many professors struggle with the idea of asynchronous classes, because they think synchronous teaching is more personal. When colleges moved to emergency remote instruction this spring, many professors turned to videoconferencing because they badly wanted to see their students, and it seemed most similar to the in-person experience.

Synchronous teaching is not bad, Costa says; it just has to be used in moderation. Small sessions, done well, can provide the kind of human touch that professors might have found elusive in their hourlong Zoom classes.

Synchronous elements also tend to make sense in certain contexts: office hours, question-and-answer sessions, and, yes, getting to know students less formally. A professor could have a 30-minute synchronous session welcoming students to a course, Costa says, and

use the occasion to give students tips for succeeding. Synchronous need not mean video, she adds — but when it does, don't require students to turn on their cameras. They could have any number of reasons for wanting to keep them off, and forcing the issue doesn't exactly deepen the professor/student bond.

More than anything else, Costa suggests that professors new to online teaching take a well-designed online course or participate in a virtual learning community. When they do, she says, "faculty are empowered to see, 'Oh, my gosh, I can handle relationships online.' And it shows them how they can do that with their students."

— B.S.



Karen Costa

Lead a Good Online Discussion

Even under ordinary circumstances, leading a good class discussion ranks among the hardest aspects of teaching. It's one of the topics Jesse Stommel is most often asked about when he runs faculty-development workshops. So it's no wonder that during the transition to remote teaching, many instructors have found it particularly challenging to foster lively online discussions.

It's possible to hold good class discussions synchronously (say in Zoom) or asynchronously (through discussion boards), says Stommel, a senior lecturer and digital-learning fellow at the University of Mary Washing-

“Think about ways of getting your students to talk to one another, as much as getting students to talk to you as the teacher.”

ton, in Virginia. Synchronous conversations can provide a feeling of being together,

he says, while asynchronous discussion provides access, letting in students from all kinds of situations.

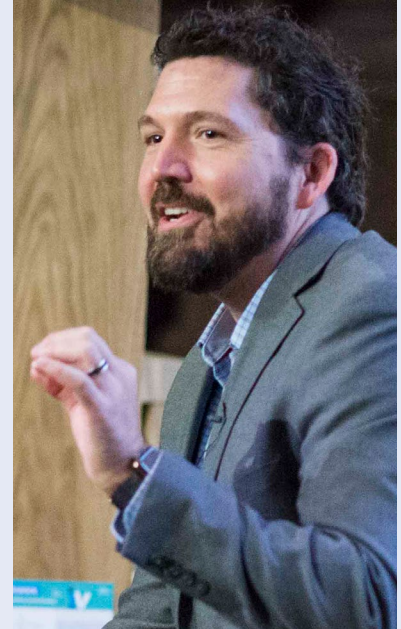
Offering a mix of formats can work well, Stommel says. In his courses, he makes synchronous discussion optional, by, say, letting students choose among posting in a discussion forum, writing a blog post, or participating in a Zoom chat. This avoids penalizing students who can't make it to a video meeting — and it also enriches the discussion, since the students who participate have chosen this format.

For Stommel, the key to a good online discussion is this: “Think about ways of getting your students to talk to one another, as much as getting students to talk to you as the teacher.”

Here are his suggestions:

Make Space: Online courses sometimes require students to hit a quota of original comments and responses to classmates' posts — and then the professor replies to each one. That's

not a good setup, Stommel says, because it “turns the conversation into a game of



Jesse Stommel

Ping-Pong, in which every student is directing their comment at the teacher and then the teacher is responding.” Besides, putting a bunch of rules in place has a tendency to shut down students' natural desire to talk to one another.

When professors teach in person, they're often advised to lengthen the amount of time they pause between posing a question and saying something else. They should step back, let silence fall, and give students time to respond. The same holds true online — only more so. After

posting a question in a discussion forum, Stommel says, “sometimes I wait days.” What often happens, he says, is “one person will step in, and then there will be an avalanche of other students contributing.”

Facilitate: When professors do weigh in, their role is to facilitate. That means looking for patterns in the conversation, pointing to similarities – and tensions – among comments that different students have made, and describing those back to the class.

In a physical classroom, professors can scan the room for raised hands or bodies leaning forward – and even listen for the intake of breath to determine which students are waiting to speak. When that discussion moves to a videoconference, “one of the hardest things is to figure out when people want to speak,” Stommel says, “and how to draw them out.”

Professors can learn a new set of cues. Students probably won’t lean forward, but they might reach to unmute themselves. Or they might unmute themselves, hear a classmate begin speaking, and set themselves back to mute. “You’re watching for indications that people want to step in,” Stommel says, “but they just look completely different in a Zoom.”

Keep Track of Who’s Speaking: Just as they would in person, professors leading discussions online should be attentive to which students are participating. Have all the students who answered this question been men? In a discussion of queer issues, has “not a single one of the openly queer students in the class” spoken? If such a pattern emerges, “think to yourself, what’s going on in the classroom that’s making that happen?” Stommel says. “And sometimes you’ll have a conversation with your students about that,” so they will pay attention to those dynamics going forward, too.

– B.S.

pus, and transfer credit to their home campus. Bishop anticipates that some under-resourced institutions may turn to the global campus for help in offering students key courses in the fall. But she’s not sure how quickly it can scale up to meet potential demand.

“It’s about figuring out what was most important and working best in your course before, and using a different environment to connect with those things.”

In the meantime, Bishop says, institutions should consider pairing up faculty members who are experienced in online teaching with those who aren’t, as well as creating and sharing well-designed online versions of gateway courses. As long as money and expertise are in limited supply, she says, resource-sharing is going to be integral to getting higher education successfully through the fall semester. “We better be able to point to the things we’ve done better in the summer and fall,” she says. “It’s going to matter to the students, to parents paying tuition, to regents, to everybody.”

CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS

Developing and maintaining connections among students, and between professors and students, may be the trickiest aspect of online learning, but it’s the most important. (See sidebar, Page 24.)

Students this spring said they missed their professors and classmates. Many found online versions of their courses unengaging or were generally uncomfortable with learning online. The physical distance between students and instructors, and the inability of technology to

convey the body language we rely on to read one another's moods and thoughts, creates an immediate barrier to intimacy and free-flowing discussion.

Robin DeRosa, director of the Open Learning and Teaching Collaborative at Plymouth State University, has asked faculty members and administrators to keep those concerns at the front of their minds as they plan for the fall.

"Students are generally looking for connection, learning, and a sense of purpose," she says. "It's not about building a flashy new course that we can show off. It's about figuring out what was most important and working best in your course before, and using a different environment to connect with those things."

Other teaching experts echo that concern, and have encouraged faculty members to think about different ways to engage with students come fall.

Greene, of Santa Cruz, says that some faculty members were disappointed this spring by students' lack of participation in videoconference-based classes. As the campus prepares for the possibility of remote instruction next term, Greene says she is encouraging them to think of other ways to

engage students. (See sidebar, Page 21.)

Professors can ask students to watch recorded lectures, or read the professor's notes, she says, and save class time for discussion. They can offer a lot of low-stakes

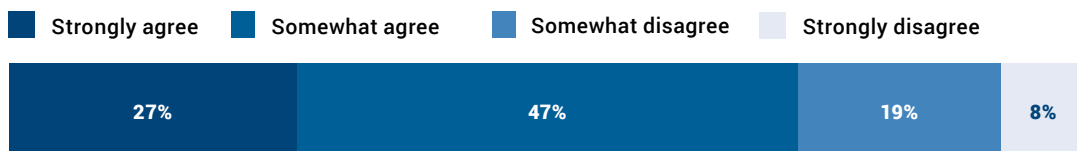
"We better be able to point to the things we've done better in the summer and fall," she says. "It's going to matter to the students, to parents paying tuition, to regents, to everybody."

assessments, ask students to work together on projects, or ask them to do small exercises, all of which keep students involved and connected. (See sidebar, Page 26.)

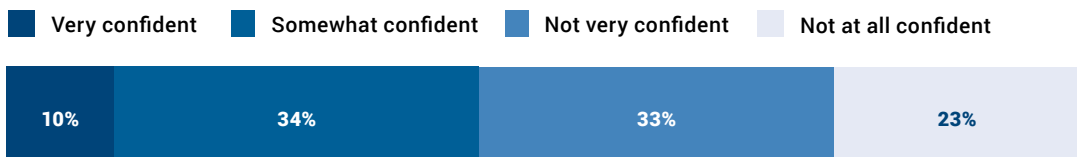
Greene also tells professors to be mind-

Mixed Emotions About the Fall

Nearly three out of four surveyed professors "strongly" or "somewhat" agree they're looking forward to returning to in-person teaching in the fall.



But more than half lack confidence in their institution's ability to maintain social-distancing safeguards on campus.



Source: *Chronicle* survey

ful that what looks like lack of interest may actually be stress. To that end, Santa Cruz has developed workshops for faculty members on how to foster resilience in students. That might include sending regular reminders of due dates to the class or embedding links to technical and mental health support into coursework. “For students who are stressed out or traumatized,” she says, “we need to repeat ourselves a lot.”

Small residential colleges, whose appeal is rooted in a communal educational experience, may have the steepest hills to climb, should teaching remain online in the fall. Based on their experiences in the spring, college leaders say that professors will need to continue to invest a lot of time in reimagining that immersive experience online.

In addition to running live classes, professors at Connecticut College held extended office hours through remote videoconferencing this spring, checked in with students by phone, met with small groups of students during their classes, and assigned group work among classmates, says Michael Reder, director of the center for teaching and learning.

“I feel as if in most ways we are continuing to deliver the personalized education we always have,” he says. “Then there’s also the support we offer in terms of academic resources: student counseling services, tutoring, peer advisers. All of that is still happening. It’s happening virtually, but that is still happening.”

As academic leaders navigate the sum-

mer and prepare for instruction in the fall, they must balance a complex and interlocking series of challenges. As this report describes, they must review their experi-



79%

Share of professors who said “creating a sense of engagement or connection between myself and my students” was “very” or “somewhat” challenging this spring.

Source: Chronicle survey

ence with remote instruction in the summer, address shortcomings in technology and pedagogy, prepare faculty members or hybrid and online forms of teaching, invest wisely in training and technology, and seek outside assistance where needed. With careful planning, and an eye toward continuous improvement, they can ensure that they are prepared for all contingencies in the coming months.

SECTION 2



RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS

Online vs. Face-to-Face

Numerous studies have evaluated whether online education lives up to the classroom. A 2018 study compared students in three in-person courses to their online counterparts. The online students had higher grades and reported being more satisfied.

Dialogue Matters

A 2016 study of 372 online students found that the quality of dialogue – defined as "positive and meaningful interaction" – with the instructor was "one of the strongest predictors of learning outcomes." This echoed an earlier finding that building rapport with students through personal emails and video updates can improve grades and retention.

Bigger Can Be Better

While some studies suggest that online students tend to be less satisfied with very large courses, there are exceptions. A 2015 study of a highly successful online course at the University of California at San Diego found that outlining "a coherent set of course concepts" and presenting the material in small chunks helped keep students engaged.

Guidance and Clarity

Multiple studies have pointed to the importance of instructional design in online courses. So what does that mean, specifically? A 2018 study found that students rated discussions structured around clear questions, along with working on "real world" projects, as particularly beneficial. The students also appreciated frequent email reminders.

Flexibility

A 2019 study tracked online learners over one semester and found that they liked to move at their own pace and preferred to have all assignments and material available from the beginning of the course. Researchers also emphasized the importance of communication and suggested trying to "respond at least once a week to all students."

SECTION 3



Voices from the Trenches

W

hat does it take to deliver a college education in unforeseen and unprecedented circumstances? How do you reach and support students, build and sustain communities, and follow through on your mission when you are no longer based on a campus?

Our report concludes with personal accounts from faculty members and some thoughts from a college dean. They reflect on what they learned from the spring semester, what they wish they'd known, and offer advice on how to improve for the fall.

The shift to virtual learning demanded extraordinary agility and flexibility on the part of students, faculty, and administrators — the challenges were numerous, and sizable. As we look ahead, the only thing certain about the fall semester is more uncertainty. Reflection, innovation, preparation, and perseverance will be key. In the words of one faculty member, “Aim for the target. If you miss, try again.”

5 Takeaways From My Covid-19 Remote Teaching

Perhaps the most important lesson from academe's rapid shift to remote teaching is that there is no wrong way to salvage your courses during a global emergency.

This semester, if you (a) made a good-faith effort to identify what was essential for your students and (b) set up ways for them to keep moving forward, you did great. From what I've seen and read, faculty members around the world have been doing far more than just putting in a good-faith effort during the Covid-19 crisis. Most of us have moved heaven and earth to ensure some kind of continuity in our students' education, even as we have spent our own days coping with emotional and personal strains we could hardly have imagined mere months ago.

We've spent hours videoconferencing with students. I don't mean robotically delivering preplanned lectures — I mean meeting with students in small groups or one-on-one to talk through problems. We've served as tech support for students (and sometimes for colleagues) on technology that we've just barely learned ourselves. And we've been rolling with the punches as campus policies and plans changed, then changed again.

In short, we did the job we signed up to do — under conditions that none of us signed up for. And, unfortunately, it looks like many of us will be in the same predicament come September.

Nothing about how we will teach in

the fall semester looks certain. And that means faculty members must be ready to teach fully or partially online — either from the start of the semester, or as a sudden pivot if in-person teaching resumes and Covid-19 cases spike again. This

time, however, you won't be going in blind. You have time, as the 2019-20 academic year comes to a close, to think about lessons learned and what you're going to do differently in September if your classroom shifts once again to the virtual realm.

For myself, I'm beginning this process by reflecting on what went well in my own courses during the spring semester, what didn't, and what has surprised even me, a veteran of the educational-technology and online-learning scene.

Lesson No. 1:
They've gotten a bad rap, but Zoom classes can be

rewarding.

Well before Covid-19, online education had identified one of the most important design choices in constructing our courses: the balance of synchronous (holding class at preset times that students attend together) and asynchronous techniques (organizing activities such as lectures, quizzes, and discussions that students can complete at a time of their choosing).

Perhaps the biggest surprise for me was how often institutions favored one approach over the other this spring, steering their faculty members toward either synchronous or asynchronous instruction.



COMMENTARY

MICHELLE D. MILLER

There's not really a right or wrong answer to which is better. Each has major upsides and downsides. Some institutions went for one extreme, strongly recommending or requiring that instructors teach "live," while others heavily discouraged real-time courses via Zoom and other such video tools in favor of asynchronous techniques.

Equally surprising were the outcomes this spring from my own synchronous and asynchronous choices as I shifted my courses to remote instruction. Wary of falling into the trap of long, boring Zoom presentations, and worried about students who wouldn't be able to attend required classwide meetings (for all kinds of reasons), I set up only a few Zoom sessions and didn't require attendance. Instead, I organized lots of asynchronous discussion boards and put out a standing offer to help students with any problems, in whatever modalities worked best for them.

But then, my optional sessions were not only well-attended but also unexpectedly rewarding for me and for the students.

Especially given that most of my teaching at this moment happens to be focused on graduate students, the opportunity for social support and maintenance of our group dynamic was a welcome one. I ended up scheduling a few more optional sessions than I had originally planned, and even brought in a guest speaker to help ring out our semester together.

So, yes, synchronous teaching via videoconference can be tiring and occasionally glitchy, and is no panacea. But my live classes turned out much better than I thought they would, which is a lesson I will take into future semesters.

Lesson No. 2:
Have a pivot plan.

This summer I will put together all the usual materials — syllabi, readings, quizzes — for my fall in-person courses. But I am also planning to prepare a list of alternatives in case I have to move my courses online or, conversely, if we start online but move back to a physical classroom later in the fall semester.

I don't plan to build a whole backup

course. But I do want to think about all the major elements and how they could be reconstructed or reconceptualized in a virtual classroom, if that proves necessary again.

Lesson No. 3:
Student goals will take center stage.

I've always prided myself on being a student-focused teacher. But the process of stripping down a course to its core purpose, in order to adapt it quickly to a virtual classroom, revealed how much further I could go with envisioning students as active creators of their own learning. This experience drove home a point I already knew but maybe needed to be reminded of: What students want to get out of a course ought to be at the center of everything I do.

The contrast between me in regular-teaching mode and me in remote-teaching mode this semester reminded me of how easy it is to lose sight of that aim amid the nitty-gritty of grading policies, assessments, standards, rubrics, and so on. In the future, regardless of modality, I will explicitly invite students in every course I teach to reflect on what they

In short, we did the job we signed up to do — under conditions that none of us signed up for.

want to achieve and tell me how I can help make that happen. I plan to rework my syllabi to convey that philosophy upfront, and I'll start the fall semester with an assignment in which students articulate what they want from the course and what kind of support from me would be most helpful.

Lesson No. 4:
High-stakes assessments are overrated.

And they're going to recede even further into the background of my teaching,

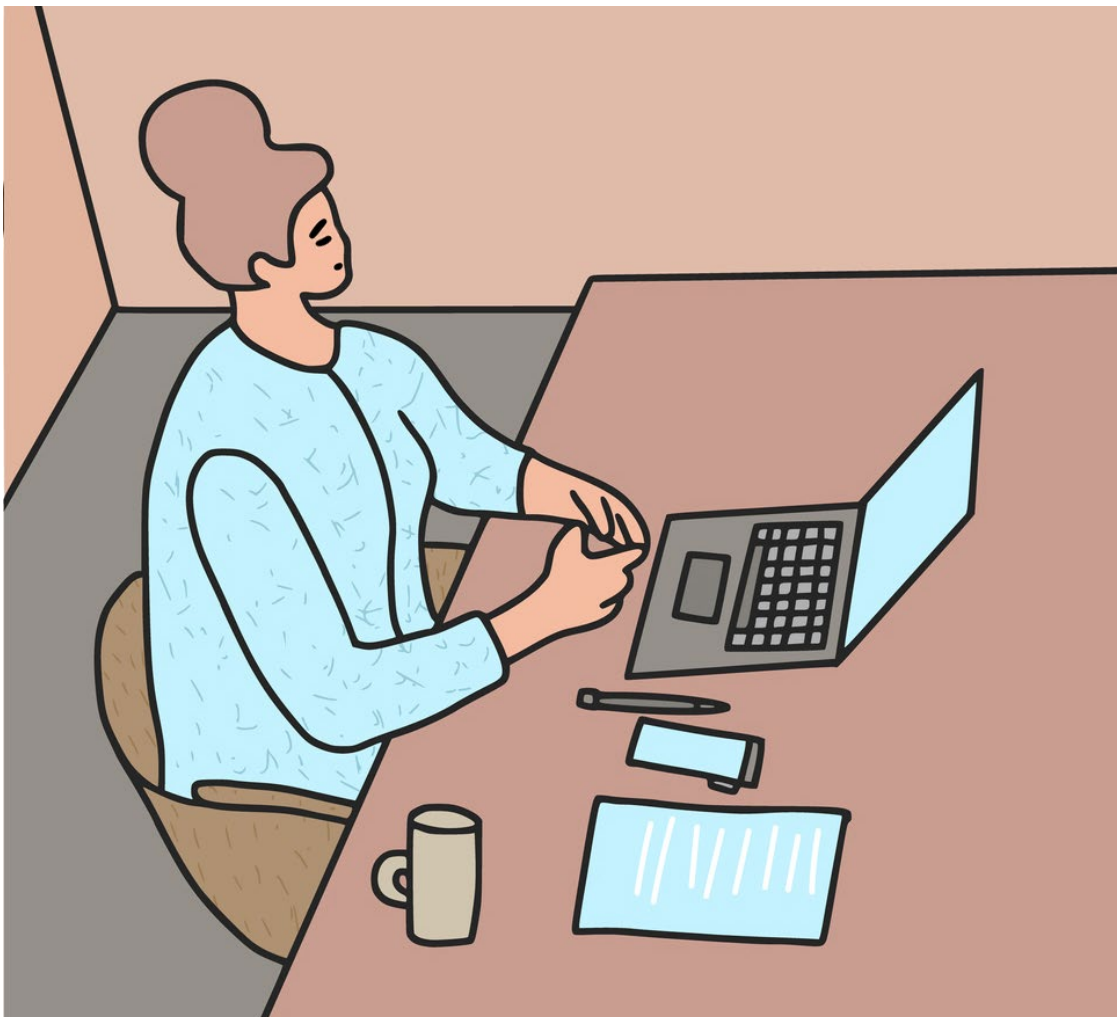
whether in person or online. The details will shake out as I get into the planning process for each course. But one way or another, I'm going to avoid anything that puts students in the position of cramming a lot of work in on a test or a project within a short time frame, just to satisfy a grade requirement. Such heavily weighted assignments turned out to be the worst ones to try to run with integrity in a virtual environment. (They also tend to conflict with Lesson No. 3, where I am trying to shift emphasis off of my own goals for the course and onto students' goals.)

For a while now, teaching experts have advised that students learn best from frequent low-stakes quizzes and other assignments — either in addition to, or in place of, traditional midterms, final exams, and term papers. These experts have

also pointed out that high-stakes tests and papers are a breeding ground for academic dishonesty, and that online exams raise concerns about high-tech remote-proctoring options.

Summer is a good time to re-examine what I'm really trying to accomplish with those big midterms, finals, and projects, and to consider alternative ways to reach the same learning goals, while giving students more control and choice, and reducing the need for intense proctoring.

The alternatives could include assignments that are linked to students' actual interests and engage their attention over a longer period of time — things like creating a series of blog posts, doing a project on real-world problems, or discussing examples of course concepts that show up in the news media. On my end, it could also mean trying



GETTY IMAGES

out different ways to evaluate their work, such as ungrading or specifications grading.

**Lesson No. 5:
Student mental health will be on my mind.**

The importance of teaching with compassion and care has become a more and more prominent theme in discussions about college pedagogy, and there has never been a better time to listen to what those voices have to say. While it's impossible to predict what will happen this fall, we can safely say that our classes will be filled with students who are struggling to cope.

Campus systems for dealing with student anxiety and depression were already under strain before the Covid-19 crisis, and so I think we will all need to pitch in, just as we did this spring, in ways that we haven't before.

At the same time, we need to respect appropriate professional limitations and boundaries — something that Karen Costa, in her podcast on the subject, terms “scope of practice.” I don't know exactly how my teaching will change to accommodate these mental-health issues, but I know that it will have to. So I'll go into fall with a much higher awareness of trauma-informed pedagogy.

WHAT INSTITUTIONS MUST DO.

In the Covid-19 crisis, as in any stressful situation, it's helpful to focus on the things that are within our power to control. But at the same time, I think it is important to avoid framing the goal of a successful fall semester as merely a matter of individual initiative.

Our institutions and our leadership also need to step up, with the same kind of intensive reflection and commitment to adaptability that faculty have demonstrated. And just as we teachers now need, more than ever, to see our students as whole people, our institutions need to recognize that faculty members are not just course-delivering machines, but human beings who are struggling to make sense of, and cope with, all that has happened.

It's also an excellent time for academic leaders to beef up their engagement with

all the great research and thinking that's been going on in the field of higher-education pedagogy. That doesn't just refer to research on online teaching (although that's probably the most critical place to start). It also means getting up to speed on

I'm going to avoid anything that puts students in the position of cramming a lot of work in on a test or a project within a short time frame, just to satisfy a grade requirement.

the learning sciences, inclusive pedagogy, and other important frameworks such as universal design for learning.

There are only going to be more critical decisions that come down the pike as we get through this. Grounding campus policies in research will make for better-quality decisions as well as better buy-in for those decisions.

If the Covid-19 crisis ends up making me a better-prepared, more supportive, and more agile teacher, so much the better. And if it spurs our institutions to put more priority on serious collaboration between administrators and faculty members, backed up by the best evidence and research out there — well, we couldn't ask for more. I'm not one to say that this tragedy is full of silver linings. However, I intend to come through it stronger, and I hope our whole profession will, too.

Michelle D. Miller is a professor of psychological sciences at Northern Arizona University and co-creator of its First Year Learning Initiative. Her latest book is Minds Online: Teaching Effectively With Technology, published by Harvard University Press.

10 Lessons Learned and 10 Goals for the Fall

Catherine Denial

professor of American history
Knox College

I thought that checking in with my students via Zoom would be a great way for us to feel connected, but it turned out that using Slack (a textual interface) was much better at capturing our personalities, feelings,



Catherine Denial

thoughts, and humor. I had no idea how effective a well-placed emoji or gif could be in communicating empathy or deepening a conversation or just making people laugh. Text felt wooden and unforgiving before — say, in comments on papers — but I’ve learned just how flexible and creative text-based learning can be.

Sarah Rose Cavanagh

associate professor of psychology and
associate director of the D’Amour Center for
Teaching Excellence

Assumption College

Group work and projects and discussions have always been a big part of my teaching, but I think I expected with the pivot online that students would find the requirements to respond to each other’s posts laborious. But, in fact, this seemed to be the part of the remote instruction they put the most energy into. On discussion boards, they went above and beyond replying to each other, thinking carefully about each other’s contributions and encouraging each other. When we’re in the classroom together, I have to plan very carefully to have students engage with other students outside of their natural friend group — using techniques like snowball discussions [students begin talking about an issue with a partner, then join another pair of partners, etc.]. But bringing things online, students spontaneously and seemingly naturally responded to people they had never seemed

to talk to in class much. In my upper-level neuroscience seminar, my students engage in some peer teaching. I was nervous about the added challenge of doing this remotely, but the class really leapt to the challenge and seemed to enjoy leading the charge. With one or two exceptions, this semester I ran everything asynchronously. I had lots of individual student meetings



Sara Rose Cavanagh

over Zoom and met with my larger class for a conclusions/goodbye class, but my “classes” were all minilectures via recorded videos, activities, discussion boards, and assignments. I did this, in large part, because I was hearing from students that their lives were, unsurprisingly, quite disrupted. Some students were sharing com-

puter resources with parents and siblings. Many took jobs — in ERs, grocery stores, pharmacies. A few were sick themselves or had relatives who were sick. I didn't feel like I could expect most of them to attend class at the same time as our on-the-ground class. For the fall, I'll still do the

same general approach (recorded lectures with quizzing and activities interspersed), but I hope to hold some synchronous class times, framed around virtual breakout rooms for students to have small-group discussions together, live Q&A, demonstrations, etc.

Jim Clements

associate professor (teaching) of writing

University of Southern California

There's something ineffable and magical about a classroom. I can do all the same things online — lecture, have discussions, run office hours, collaborate, share work, and so on — but it's less enjoyable, less stimulating, and less effective.

A college is a community, not just a collection of classrooms. What students missed most was friendships, coffee between classes, reading beside other students in the library, study groups, events, Greek life, and everything in between — not just because those things are fun, but because they provide the structure, support, and stimulus to help them excel in their classes. When students crumbled during the online part of the semester (and they did crumble), it was because their college experience existed only on a laptop, and they were all on their own.

What I'll do differently in the fall:

- I'll try to build more of a community for the students. Normally they chit-chat with each other before

and after (or during) class. They vent, talk about their other courses, talk sports and movies — but this is gone now, and it's more of an essential part of the college experience than I realized. Everything's just flat without that camaraderie. So I'm going to give them more time to talk to each other, not just about the course material but also about how they're handling the course material, and about what's going on in their lives. We'll do this in breakout groups, anonymous message boards, and at the beginning and end of class.

- This semester, I recorded a lot of classes because it was impossible to do everything synchronously with students scattered all over the world, and with technical and personal challenges. I'm not going to do this anymore, because, after taking an online course myself, I realized that watching a video of a person talking is an awful way to learn. I've learned that online teaching unconsciously pressures you into using all the technological marvels at your fingertips, but if it's a speech that can be recorded, it can also be written down, and reading, as old-school as it might be, is a much better way to receive information.



Jim Clements

Viji Sathy

teaching professor of psychology and neuroscience and administrator in the undergraduate-education office

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

There are a lot of lessons learned, but I'd say the single most important lesson was that I had to ask myself early and often: What really matters? What is essential and what is not? ... Honestly, I think the students were shocked that I was making adjustments at all, leave alone that I wanted their input about it.

I distinctly recall one class session where I explained that I wanted to keep the culminating group project in place for the learning objectives it offered. But recognizing their worry about doing group work remotely, the TAs and I revised the template we'd provided. We adjusted an assignment to focus on how the group would work together, what platforms they would use to communicate with one another, how they would share the work, what they would do if a member wasn't responsive, etc. ... We stripped the template of unnecessary sections and left only the pieces that were central to the learning objectives we felt needed practice.

One of the aspects of remote instruction that became essential was an intentional practice of checking in with my students in multiple modes. I started a Remind back-channel where I would share something in the day that put a smile on my face. Students who opted into this channel could reciprocate if they wanted to. I had to get over feeling like I was "broadcasting" about myself (as an introvert, that was very difficult). Rather, I was finding a way to stay connected with students with some of the informal chatter we would have had before class or in office hours, to be humans together in this human experience.

For fall and beyond, I'd like to rethink my assessment practices. For practicality, in my large courses, we were using primarily closed-ended exam questions, timed and proctored. During this switch, I decided that I didn't want students to be tempted to be academically dishonest, so I moved to an

open-book, open-note exam. I gave students multiple days to take the exam, because I wasn't sure if their home environment was conducive to a two- to three-hour stretch of uninterrupted quiet time. Even using a streamlined online grading platform, the exams took much longer to grade. Writing questions that couldn't be Googled took much longer to make. I'd like to think we could sustain this approach semester after semester, but the truth is, there are a finite



Viji Sathy

number of ways to ask about certain concepts. Instead, I'd like to move away from a few high-stakes exams to do more periodic assessments.

I'd also like to incorporate more practice with a new question type I introduced this term — the reflection question. I asked: "Reflect on your overall experience in this class by describing an interesting idea that you learned, why it was interesting, and what it tells you about statistics or conducting research." I loved reading the responses.

Ben Hassman

*lecturer in rhetoric and director of the
Conversation Center*

University of Iowa

While I've long valued students' relationships with one another, I've found them to be even more important in the spring semester. With the emergency switch, students faced so many deviously subtle challenges — the sort that are hard to name and that might easily cause students to question their ability, their commitment, or their fit. For example, you may feel that not seeing your college friends for a couple weeks shouldn't affect your ability to complete reading quizzes. Barriers to learning can be easily reified as genuine through relationships with fellow students in a normal semester walking between classes, at the lunch table, or waiting for the bus. But without those physical opportunities, it's important



Ben Hassman

for us to build out other ways for them to check themselves against the efforts and interpretations of others, to have an outlet for the natural frustrations and challenges of the learning process.

For the fall, I'm working to bring in more student context and examples. For each discussion, I'm planning to give both a general prompt (for everyone to respond to) and specific discussion-leader prompts that are about connecting course material to examples from students' lives and experiences. While not all of it will be directly related to the Covid-19 response or ensuing social upheaval, those will certainly be available contexts for students to draw on. This will (hopefully) serve the purpose of helping students see each other and build working learning relationships — at the same time as it gives us concrete discussion material for unpacking and examining course concepts (and doing so in terms conceptually accessible to where students are as they enter the now-digital classroom).

Fiona Coll

*assistant professor of literature and
technology*

**State University of New York College at
Oswego**

The most important single lesson I learned from the emergency switch to remote instruction is that slower is better. I knew we'd have to slow the pace of the course for the second half of our semester, as my students and I were going to need time to adjust to our new social, technological, and cognitive challenges. I removed from each course's syllabus a few readings and activities that weren't going to be possi-

ble in virtual form, thereby making time for more reflection and iterative adaptation.

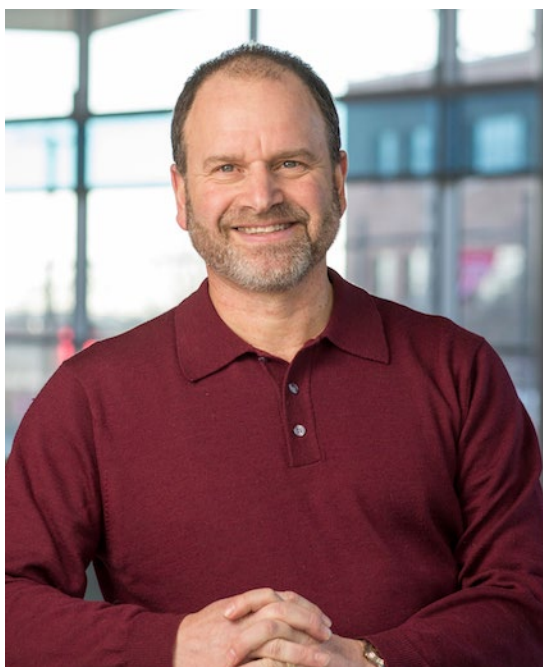
It wasn't entirely a surprise that this reduction in pace resulted in a richer engagement with course materials on everyone's part. What did come as a surprise was the discovery of



Fiona Coll

how overclocked my teaching had quietly become; as I've learned more and more about pedagogy, I've been adding elements to my courses without being as conscientious about removing elements as I might have been. As a result of this realization, I'm going to more purpose-

fully underclock my courses in the fall, whatever the modality of our teaching might be, by cutting back on the readings I assign, focusing the scope of my learning objectives more precisely, and exploring other ways to reduce cognitive load for my students and myself.



David Ingram

David Ingram

associate professor of theater

Temple University

I found that leading discussions in synchronous classes was much more difficult than doing so in face-to-face classes, where I had depended on “reading the room” in a way that wasn't possible online. Also, while I think the students liked connecting with each other, Zoom fatigue started to set in as the weeks went on.

For the fall, I plan on planning the discussions much more carefully: alternating synchronous and asynchronous sessions, more consciously aligning each session with course goals, conveying expectations more clearly, and taking care to create more-varied experiences over the semester.

Aimee Pozorski

professor of English and director of English graduate studies

Central Connecticut State University

I learned that compassion and flexibility were the most important qualities I could bring to online learning. One of my students was worrying about the health and well-being of his wife and newborn son during the last week in March and the first week in April. Another student was the primary caretaker for her elderly grandparents. I taught with those two students in mind — treating everyone with equal patience. I did a roll call

worth 10 points at the beginning of every week for the first month. I wanted to make sure I still had the attention of students. I asked them to tell me what was going on in their lives. It was a low-stakes assignment to keep them writing and engaged.

I started to question my grading practices. With all of the assignments coming through Blackboard Learn — and my worry about my students' well-being — I found myself responding mostly with encouraging notes about their ideas rather than worrying about the grace of their sentences. I found myself saying, “Yes!” and “Keep going!” a lot.

I learned that, on the one hand, best practices in these kinds of situations

suggest that asynchronous learning is more flexible and democratic. But students longed for face-to-face contact. So I scheduled a lot of Zoom and WebEx and Teams meetings with small groups of students. But those are exhausting. You can see the exhausted appreciation on students' faces.

I went into the experiment thinking students would be very happy, actually, not to have to come to class for a while — to work on their own time and in their own spaces. But they, even more than my colleagues, were devastated by the move to online learning. Even though they are digital natives, they were disoriented and confused in the face of all of these different options. They want to go back to school in the fall, at all costs, which has many of us worried that it will not be safe to do so.

I learned how ironic it is that what this sudden move has shown is that all students crave the seminar-style, community-building learning environments that the liberal-arts colleges offer. But those are the institutions that will be hurt the most with enrollment shortfalls. A state institution with a high commuter population like



Aimee Pozorski

the one I teach at will probably be OK in this new economic reality, but the fact that all of our students, like most of the students around the country, crave face-to-face, boutique-style instruction suggests that we need

to try to save the liberal-arts colleges, too.

Practically speaking, I learned that if I find I can teach in twos — two skills I want students to learn, two platforms for delivering it — then I am on solid ground. If students know where to find the content, know where to upload their assignments, and know how to get ahold of me, they can make do.

But I also learned that in my commitment to being available to dozens and dozens of students, to meet them where they are, there never was a time to shut down for the night, to take a break. I was terrible at setting limits. My notifications on my phone from text, email, GroupMe, WebEx, Teams, Messenger, Zoom, and WhatsApp went off at all hours of the day and night. Even though I saw my students far less face to face, they entered my digital world from all angles, all the time. I had a hard time balancing my commitment to my students' needs and my commitment to myself and my family.

In the fall, what I plan to do differently:

- I am going to be a different kind of grader and consider the big picture of student writing rather than the details of sentences.
- I am going to set boundaries for me and for them regarding how they can reach me and when they can expect me to respond.
- I am going to offer regular and optional Zoom minimeetings — maybe with five students at a time, to keep them engaged, but maybe for no more than an hour or 30 minutes.
- I need to find a way to assign work that students find meaningful and worthwhile — work that has a future and is not just some paper uploaded into a repository waiting for me to grade.
- I will assign more reading aloud. This semester, I had students tape themselves doing dramatic readings and then upload the readings as an MP4 file. I want to find a way to make that collaborative. When we unpack passages together in class, that is when the magic happens. How do you replicate that online?

Clarissa Sorensen-Unruh

chemistry instructor

Central New Mexico Community College

In terms of online instruction, I think the key is remembering, at all times, that this is the students' learning journey, not ours. ... When the Covid-19 stay-at-home order was announced, I immediately made a Google form that asked students questions about their situation: What kinds of devices were they using to manage the courses? Where did they access their Wi-Fi? Did their external situation (work, kids) change dramatically



Clarissa Sorensen-Unruh

when the stay-at-home order was issued?

Since summative assessment (i.e., exams) needed to change for every class I taught, I asked them about their pedagogical needs: What kinds of exams did they want to complete to test their learning? Were there alternative assessments they would rather complete than an exam? What kinds of resources did they want me to provide — online office hours? Increased simulations? Alternative textbooks? I analyzed the Google-form results (which were anonymous) and communicated the results back to my students. This Google form then became the basis of my teaching plan for the Covid-19 isolation.

In the fall, I plan to provide more opportunities for students to co-author the class, particularly in how the content is delivered and how the students will be assessed. In the past, I had never dreamed of involving students at the course-design level; after this Covid-19 spring semester, I can't imagine designing the course without the involvement of my students.

Erin Whitteck

assistant director of the Center for Teaching and Learning and assistant teaching professor of chemistry

University of Missouri at St. Louis

The most important lesson I learned about teaching this semester is the need to underscore the difference between equity and equality in our teaching practices. Blanket policies for late assignments, the use of remote proctoring, punitive attendance policies, etc., are typically implemented in the name of fairness. Remote teaching because of Covid-19 has amplified our disparities and the need for more equitable and inclusive practices. For fall 2020 I aim to emphasize in our faculty-development programming that, although this year has been a challenge, it is also an opportunity to reimagine how we can design



Erin Whitteck

learning experiences for our diverse student population by providing flexible paths to achieve a student's definition of success whether that be in online, on-ground, or blended classes.

RESOURCES

EDUCAUSE

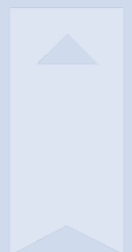
QUALITY MATTERS

QM

OLC

ONLINE LEARNING
CONSORTIUM

ACUE





COURTESY OF ONLINE LEARNING CONSORTIUM

A presenter from Carolina Coastal U. describes best practices in online teaching at a workshop offered by the Online Learning Consortium.

OUTSOURCING TRAINING

By BETH MCMURTRIE

Most colleges have limited capacity to train faculty members to design and teach online or hybrid courses, so some are turning to outside organizations for help. Here are a few of the main groups that offer training and support — both paid and free — for individual instructors and for institutions.

The **Online Learning Consortium** offers workshops, webinars, and other training through its Institute for Professional Development, as well as a number of free resources on its website. It also offers customized consulting for colleges that want to improve their online learning programs.

One of the more popular offerings this spring, says Angela Gunder, vice president for online learning, is a train-the-trainer

model, to help colleges train their instructional designers and other staff who support professors as they design online courses. For colleges with very limited resources, OLC will help connect them with peers at other colleges to provide support. It recently received a \$50,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to provide affordable professional development to minority-serving institutions as they move to online instruction during the pandemic.

Educause supports faculty members, instructional designers, academic-technology professionals, and others through dozens of specialized listservs where people share advice and seek support, says Malcolm Brown, director of learning initiatives. It also shares the instructional-continuity plans of var-

ious colleges and provides resources for online course development and online teaching strategies.

Quality Matters runs a nationally recognized quality-assurance program for instructors who design online courses. To manage the high demand brought about by the shift to remote learning, the organization created a shorter version of its flagship program, called “New to Online Teaching,” which focuses on best practices in course design and effective online teaching. Instructors can take courses on their own, or institutions can sign up groups of faculty members, says Deb Adair, executive director.

The **Association of College and University Educators** trains and credentials faculty members in the use of evidence-based teaching practices through a 25-module training program. A version of the course designed around effective online teaching was released in June. ACUE also offers other options, including microcredentials — short courses for which faculty members can sign up individually or in groups; specialized training for groups of faculty members from a particular college, in collaboration with campus facilitators; and free online resources, including an online-teaching toolkit and webinars on effective online instruction.

Tricia Russ, executive director of partnerships, says the pandemic has revealed how little training instructors typically receive on how to teach, whether online or in person. “Every day on most campuses, there is someone who is a discipline expert put into a classroom with zero preparation to teach,” she says. “This helps us remember that.”

The National Council for Online Education provides research and evidence-based practices for online learning. It is a partnership among several groups: the Online Learning Consortium, Quality Matters, the Wiche Cooperative for Educational Technologies, and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association.

Outside Resources

There’s another kind of outsourcing that colleges may want to consider: using courses and course material created by others. These include:

- **Virtual laboratories.** Created by companies like Labster and nonprofit collaboratives like ChemCollective, these products can be incorporated into online science courses for situations in which students can’t do hands-on lab work on campus.
- **Open-educational resources.** These digital materials are, by definition, freely available online and adaptable to the needs of an instructor or a course. They can be particularly useful in large gateway or other introductory courses, and offer alternatives to costly textbooks. Merlot, OpenStax and OER Commons are nonprofit sources of such materials.
- **Online courses.** These come in many forms, such as StraighterLine, which offers low-cost general education courses, and Coursera, an online MOOC platform. Coursera recently created a search engine called CourseMatch, through which colleges can match their needs with the platform’s offerings. Colleges with limited capacity to offer online courses may want to consider whether to allow students to take courses for credit through such providers.

Among institutions already planning for the fall, 73 percent are adding or using virtual labs, 72 percent are using collaboration applications, and 36 percent are using digital or virtual studios, according to an Educause poll.

There are, obviously, an enormous and growing number of virtual educational resources available to colleges, some of which are free. And many companies, both in the spirit of goodwill and in hopes of recruiting future customers, offered free or discounted services this spring. (Educause created a Google spreadsheet to help sort through some of these offers.)

Academic leaders should work with their teaching and learning centers, academic technologists, and IT staff to determine which options might make sense for their needs.

FURTHER READING

[*An Urgency of Teachers*](#), by Sean Michael Morris and Jesse Stommel, Hybrid Pedagogy Inc., 2018

[“5 Low-Tech, Time-Saving Ways to Teach Online During Covid-19,”](#) by Flower Darby, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 14, 2020

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[“How to Help Struggling Students Succeed Online,”](#) by Beth McMurtrie, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 26, 2020

[*Hybrid-Flexible Course Design: Implementing Student-Directed Hybrid Classes*](#), by Brian J. Beatty, EdTech Books, 2019

[“Let’s Add Compassion to our Online Curriculum,”](#) by Karen J. Head, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 31, 2020

[*99 Tips for Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos*](#), by Karen Costa, Stylus Publishing, 2020

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[*Teaching Online: A Guide to Theory, Research, and Practice*](#), by Claire Major, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015

[“Why You Shouldn’t Try to Replicate Your Classroom Teaching Online,”](#) by Beckie Supiano, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 30, 2020

[“Zoomed Out’: Why ‘Live’ Teaching Isn’t Always the Best,”](#) by Beckie Supiano, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 2, 2020



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Beth McMurtrie covers innovation in teaching and the future of learning as a senior writer. She has written about a range of topics for *The Chronicle* over the past 20 years, including scholarship, entrepreneurship, economic divides, campus culture, diversity, and religion. For eight years she was *The Chronicle's* international editor, directing coverage of foreign higher education and the global activities of U.S. institutions. She is the author of "The Future of Learning: How Colleges Can Transform the Educational Experience" and "Reforming Gen Ed: Strategies for Success on Your Campus" from Chronicle Intelligence.



Beckie Supiano covers teaching, learning, and the human interactions that shape them. A senior writer, she co-writes Teaching, *The Chronicle's* weekly newsletter devoted to those issues. Supiano joined *The Chronicle* in 2008 and previously covered college affordability. She grew up in Ann Arbor, Mich., and lives in Florida. She is the author of "The Creativity Challenge: Teaching Students to Think Outside the Box," from Chronicle Intelligence.

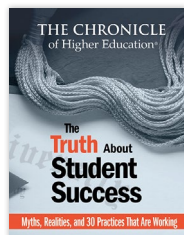
Tom Bartlett is a senior writer covering social science, the humanities, and other topics. He's the recipient, with Nell Gluckman, of the 2018 Society of Professional Journalists award for national magazine investigative reporting. His articles have appeared in *The Washington Post*, *WIRED*, *The New York Times*, *Politico*, *Texas Monthly*, and other publications..

A portion of this report previously appeared in *The Chronicle*.

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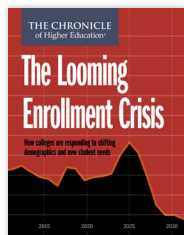


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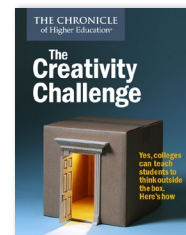


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