

Developing An Example-Based Faculty Training Course

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Abstract

In an effort to attract and retain students, higher education distance learning organizations are coming to realize the importance of faculty training and support. Research has shown that one of the factors highly correlated to student retention in the online environment is faculty performance. (1) It is generally accepted that there is also a connection between student satisfaction with faculty performance and student learning. (2) (3) Student satisfaction rises when students are challenged by the faculty and interested in the material. The presence of knowledgeable, experienced, personable, confident and most importantly well-trained faculty creates a classroom environment which produces student interaction and ultimately leads to a high level of student satisfaction with the entire learning experience. This paper/presentation describes lessons learned in the development of a faculty training course intended for faculty who plan to present their first online course.

The course detailed in this paper is based upon the principle of placing the new faculty member in the role of a student. Typical students are motivated and they are adults. We tell students, up-front, the course is completely asynchronous and that they must be prepared to logon and participate in course activities five out of seven days every week (this simulates how they should manage their own future classrooms). Active participation counts for 30 to 40% of the credit earned for successful course completion.

The course is organized in modules. The major topic of the first module is preparations for teaching a distance learning course. Subtopics include definition and organization of your asynchronous classroom, relating learning outcomes to activities, converting activities from a face to face (F2F) format to a virtual format, organizing course modules, online tools for measuring the degree of student learning and important elements of an online syllabus to promote student interaction.

For the second module, the major topic is “What Works and What Doesn't” in the distance learning environment. Subtopics include formats for lectures and lecturettes, the value of supplemental reading materials, student research projects, team assignments, the value of frank and frequent formal feedback, and encouraging participation.

The third module is intended for introducing the new faculty member to student behavior and student satisfaction. Subtopics include dealing with problem students, students who lurk, detecting and handling plagiarism, copyright guides, grades and ending the course (what should be included in the last week of the course).

In all phases of this course, the presentation, student participation and assignment activities will mimic successful behaviors and approaches that promote learning and student satisfaction in the distance learning classroom.

Bibliography

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