The Faculty In-Box

The Major Players Shaking Up Online Education

JD Rucker

One of the promises of the Internet was to make education easier to deliver and more robust in its application. We dreamed two decades ago of teaching our students and those around the world in ways that simply weren’t possible without the connectivity associated with online networks. Now, it seems that education has finally caught up.

It isn’t just the traditional educational institutions that are having an impact. Online-only educational startups are popping up while established companies like Google are making their own play. Effectiveness often comes down to size. How many courses are offered? How many resources are available for support? How large is the infrastructure behind the learning?

Let’s take a look at the three major types of organizations getting involved with online education to see how size really matters when it comes to results.

The Old Schools: Harvard and MIT

When one thinks of higher education, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is often top of mind. The neighbor to Harvard has a long history of taking the brightest minds and making them brighter. It’s not a surprise that they teamed up to become one of the innovators in the online education arena.

With $60 million invested between them to improve their online educational offerings through a nonprofit organization they are calling “edX,” they intend to expand their presence as the leader in online universities for research schools.

Students will not receive credits for their activities, but they may be able to pay for a certificate of completion.

“The MIT’s and Harvard’s mission is to provide affordable education to anybody who wants it,” Anant Agarwal, an MIT computer science and artificial intelligence expert who is edX’s first president, told the Los Angeles Times. “Millions of people in the world don’t have access to quality education.”

Unlike most offerings from traditional colleges, these will be offered to the general public, not just paying students.

The Specialists: Course Hero

Online education isn’t always about rocket science. It could be argued that the more imperative need is not in higher education but in preparatory education where public schools are often stretched too thin to offer proper education for children outside of the norm. Excellent students are often left unchallenged while challenged students are often left behind.

Course Hero, a startup out of Redwood City, Calif., is focused on implementing programs and delivering resource to help students succeed regardless of their learning position. One such program is Optimal Learn, a digital flash-card system that utilizes the principles of spaced repetition and the learning curve to take advantage of natural memory cycles.

“Flashcards are an age-old study tool that aren’t used to their greatest potential,” Andrew Grauer, CEO of Course Hero, said earlier this year. “Digitizing flashcards—adding the ability to create, save, collaborate and share sets online—was the first step in improving the flashcard model.”

The company offers materials at every level of education and includes study document, tutors, full courses and video lectures. Perhaps most interesting about the Course Hero style is their use of real and virtual rewards to keep students motivated. Students can unlock badges by completing tasks. These achievement are popular in the growing

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gamification trend that has proven effective, particularly at the student age level. American students in particular can benefit from such styles of teaching.

The Dabbler: Google

Every few month, it seems as if Google gets a startled and decides to throw their hat in the educational arena. They have Apps for Education, Professional Development for Teachers, various resources for students, and special programs for schools to use their software.

Still, their attempts at direct involvement in education have not been very successful to date. They envisioned having a Chromebook in every school in America someday; currently it would be hard to find a school that does. They are having challenges with putting books online and having them easily indexed despite specializing in such things. Even their social network, Google+, which lightly mentioned the educational potential of features such as Hangouts, has yet to make a splash.

Why would they be on this list? The potential. Google, more than any other company, has the desire to make it work, the clout to make it happen, and the potential technology to make it easy. They are already embedded in the daily education of the entire society; when we want to learn about something, we are most likely to Google it.

With so much potential, they must be a player some day. It’s a matter of focus. If they would stop dabbling and put in the effort they could change the world to what it was supposed to be by now in terms of worldwide education.

Perhaps they should buy CourseHero (or Harvard/MIT, for that matter). Regardless of what they do, their efforts thus far have only been the tip of the iceberg.

Interview: Keith Touchberry, Criminal Justice Ethics

Andy K. Stanfield, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE)

Keith Touchberry teaches undergraduate-level criminal justice courses that include Introduction to Criminal Justice, Criminal Investigations, Law Enforcement Systems, Criminology, and Comparative Criminal Justice. He also developed and teaches Criminal Justice Ethics. He is in his fifth year teaching online at Florida Tech and taught briefly at another online institution for approximately 8 months. He has been teaching in an adjunct capacity since 1996.

To develop the skills to teach online, he took a three-week course through another online institution, but it was specific to their learning management system. Many of the principles used were similar to those at Florida Tech, so it was an easy transition. He learned the Florida Tech ELP initially through an instructional CD and then through the in-house course recently developed for all current and new instructors. He also says that Gil Conradis has been informative and helpful. His learning, however, continues as each class is different.

His greatest joy teaching online is knowing he has actually opened someone’s mind to new ideas. He states that many students have no real exposure to the criminal justice system and tend to approach the subject matter with a media-driven perception of what the industry is all about, especially law enforcement. He finds it very satisfying to know he has enlightened that perception. Since he is also a law enforcement officer, he takes pride in being able to give students a practitioner’s perspective on the issues they are studying.

His greatest struggle teaching online has been dealing with plagiarism. Touchberry finds it disheartening to have students cheat despite warnings and instructions to the contrary. While he believes that most students approach distance learning in an honest and forthright manner, instructors must be ever mindful of all forms of plagiarism and enforce school policy. Touchberry also takes very seriously his responsibility to protect the reputation of Florida Tech.

Touchberry has some advice for those considering teaching online. Stay current with the knowledge and information relevant to your field, share your experiences with your students, and always look for innovative ways to deliver information. As far as those who are thinking about teaching online, make your enthusiasm for the subject matter known. Students appreciate learning from someone who is excited about what they are teaching.

His three keys to success in online teaching are having a good relationship with his department coordinator and chair, being a practitioner in the field that he teaches, and a strong desire to inspire people to learn with an open mind, one free of bias and preconceived notions about the criminal justice field.
Relevance

Andy K. Stanfield, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE)

Introduction

Relevance is one of the most important aspects to consider when working with adult learners. In fact, relevance is one of the four major parts of John Keller’s ARCS model of designing motivation into your instruction. ARCS stands for Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. According to Keller, relevance refers to “people’s feeling or perceptions of attraction toward desired outcomes, ideas, or other people based upon their own goals, motives, and values” (2010, p. 98). Keller’s model suggests many ways to incorporate relevance into your instruction. There are three general methods to inserting relevance into a lesson: goal orientation, motive matching, and familiarity.

Goal Orientation

Relating the instruction to the learners’ goals is one way to make content relevant for students. This may be achieved by providing examples or descriptions of the instruction’s utility and to present goals to the learners or have them generate and define their own goals. Goals may be broken down into present and future goals.

Present Worth

• State the immediate benefit of the instruction if it is not self-evident.
• Include comments, anecdotes or examples that stress the intrinsic satisfactions of the subject of instruction.

Future Value

• Include statements describing what the learner will be able to do after finishing these instructional materials.
• Ensure that at least some of the examples and exercises are clearly related to the knowledge and skills the students will need in the future.
• Tell the student how the successful accomplishment of this instruction is related to future goal accomplishment.
• Tell the learner how this instruction will improve his or her general life coping skills.
• Encourage the learner to think of this instruction as contributing to the development of an intrinsically interesting area of study and development.

Motive Matching

One way to make content more relevant for students is with what Keller terms “motive matching.” Motive matching is determining when and how you can link your instructional content to your learners’ personal interests or learning styles. Instructors can use motive matching by aligning instruction with the learners’ motives and values. Instructors can match motives by stimulating the students’ motives or through role models.

Basic Motive Stimulation

• Use personal language to make the learner feel that he or she is being talked to as a person.
• Provides examples that illustrate achievement striving and accomplishment.
• Include statements of examples that illustrate the feelings associated with achievement.
• Encourage the learner to visualize the process of achieving and succeeding, and the feelings associated with it.
• Include exercises that allow for personal goal setting, record keeping and feedback.
• Include exercises that require cooperative work groups.
• Use analogies or metaphors to connect existing skills or knowledge.
• Include explicit statements about how the instruction builds on the learner’s existing skills or knowledge.
• Use examples, testimonials, etc., from persons who attained further goals after successfully completing the course of instruction.
• Include references to, or quotations from, people who can convincingly describe the benefits of the particular skill/knowledge area.

Familiarity

The third approach to inject relevance into a lesson is with familiarity. This can be accomplished by keeping the instruction aligned with the learners’ life experiences. Instructors can add relevance through familiarity by connecting new knowledge to prior experiences and by letting students have more choice.

Connection to Previous Experience

• Include explicit statements about how the instruction builds on the learner’s existing skills or knowledge.
• Use analogies or metaphors to connect the present material to processes, concepts, skills or concepts already familiar to the learner.

Options for Individualization

• Give the learner choices in the context of assignments.
• Give the learner choices in the type of assignment.

Role Models

• Use anecdotes about noteworthy people in the area of study, the obstacles they faced, their accomplishments and the consequences.
• Use examples, testimonials, etc., from persons who attained further goals after successfully completing the course of instruction.

Conclusion

Relevance is important not only for learning to occur but in order to keep motivation levels high. When designing your lessons, you and your students might find it helpful if you include specific ways of making content relevant. Remember: if students do not think a lesson has value or relevance, they may not give the lesson much attention.

Government Information at Evans Library

Cheryl Davis, Distance Learning Librarian

You have asked your students to include research and statistics from government resources for their research paper. What resources are available through the Evans Library?

The Evans Library is a Federal Depository Library and provides access to thousands of government publications.

Take a look at the newly created Government Information Research Guide! From the library’s home page at http://lib.fit.edu, you can access this information here:

Quick Start provides an overview of government resources available at Evans Library together with links to government websites covering the areas of research, business and general topics of interest.

Research Guide offers direction on finding government resources covering a variety of topics and disciplines.

Remember! If you have any questions, I am here to help. I can be reached at (321) 674-8766 or at cdavis05@fit.edu.

Social Media Policy

Dear Campus Community,

We have updated our acceptable use policy regarding the use of social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Please review the new policy at http://assets.fit.edu/scripts/policy_view.php?id=4236. This document not only defines our policy, but it provides important information regarding social media security risks and tips to help mitigate those risks. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact IT Support at (321) 674-7284.

Kelly G Marmorato <kmarmorato@fit.edu>
Office of Information Technology

Articles of Interest

Gil Conradis, eLearning Trainer and Coordinator

Keys to Engaging the Learner

www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/924/?utm_campaign=lsmag&utm_medium=email&utm_source=lsm-news

Find Out How—Mac Basics

Macs may be easier to learn and operate than other computers, however there is a learning curve and they are computers. Online students who intend to use Macs should be sure they understand and can accomplish these basics in order to put forth their best efforts in the classroom. Here is the definitive collection for basic Mac use. Please distribute.

www.apple.com/findouthow/mac/

In Education, Size Matters

http://digg.com/newsbar/topnews/in_education_size_matters

Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education, 2012: Review by Steve Kolowich

Not everybody is excited by online education, in fact the majority faculty opinion seems to be skeptical if not critical of the effectiveness versus the classroom. Most seem to agree with the blended method of online and classroom as a benefit to both teachers and students. The technical side of online learning is enthusiastic, as well as having a marked effect on overhead.

The issue in this article addresses the effectiveness on online outcomes with some very interesting visuals as well as a well thought out description of the comparisons. I think we all know the positives and negatives involved between the two; however, this article was effective in providing me a comparative state of the educational implications.

www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/conflicted-faculty-and-online-education-2012#ixzz1zCZwXgmW
Weekly Tech Tip 74: Creating Tasks in Outlook

Andy K. Stanfield, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE)

Introduction

Outlook allows you to create lists of things you need to do. Additionally, you can combine them into a single list. Tasks in Outlook also are helpful with reminders and tracking features. The items you create in Outlook allow you to track the task until it is completed. In this weekly tech tip, we are going to learn both how to create tasks in Outlook and how to add items to the To-Do bar. Creating tasks in Outlook is quick and easy to do.

Creating Tasks in Outlook

Creating Tasks
1. First, click on Tasks.
2. From Home (tasks), click the New Task button.
3. Enter a Subject, Start Date and Due Date. Enter Status/Priority and task details as needed.
4. To set a reminder for the task, check the reminder box and select a date/time for the reminder.
5. To make the task recurring, click the Recurrence button. Select the recurrence pattern and range in the dialog and click OK.
6. Click the Save & close button.

Adding an Item to the To-Do bar
1. From the Mail or Tasks view, click once in the To-Do Bar to expand it.
2. Click in the Type a New Task box, enter a description of the task, and press Enter.
3. To change a task, double click it and modify it as needed.
4. As tasks are completed, click the flag. The items will disappear.

Conclusion

If you follow these guidelines, then you should be able to create new tasks in Outlook and add items to the To-Do bar. If you have any questions, then please contact Andy Stanfield at astanfield@fit.edu or at x8531.
Weekly Tech Tip 77: How to Create a Quick Step in Outlook 2010

Andy K. Stanfield, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE)

Introduction

New to Outlook 2010, the Quick Step feature gives you the ability to apply several actions at once to your email messages. You can apply actions like add messages to a category and then into a folder or forward an email to another then delete the original.

How to Create Quick Steps in Outlook 2010

1. To Manage Quick Step, from the Email Home tab, find the Quick Steps section.
2. If you don’t see Manage Quick Steps ... link click the drop down arrow in the Quick Steps section and it will show
3. Clicking on Manage Quick Steps opens the dialog box that gives you access to edit or create new quick steps. Let’s make a quick step that puts a message into a folder and then generates a reply to all response.
4. In the Manage Quick Steps dialog box, click the New button.
5. Give your Quick Step a name and then Choose an Action using the dropdown menu of available actions.

6. Here are the available actions (the highlighting here does not indicate anything):

7. For our Quick Step, we will first select Move to Folder.

8. In the Choose folder menu we will pick the folder that I want the email to be sent to (In my case, it will be one that I've already created named Adobe Connect.)

9. Then I will click the Add Action button and select Reply All.

10. I will select the (optional) Shortcut key CTRL+Shift+3.

11. In the Tooltip text I will write “Sends to Adobe Connect folder then opens a reply to all message.” This step allows the tool tip text to display when I mouse over the quick step.

12. Click the Finish button when through.

13. When I right click the email in the inbox, then select Quick Steps, and then the name of my quick step, I perform all of the actions. I can also click the email and then press the CTRL+Shift+3 buttons and it will perform the same actions.

14. Create your own quick step! Experiment!

Conclusion

If you follow these steps, you should be able to create a Quick Step in Outlook 2010. If you have any questions, please contact Andy Stanfield at x8531 or astanfield@fit.edu. ☞
Are Colleges Failing? Higher Ed Needs New Lesson Plans

By Derek Bok | December 18, 2005

A remarkable feature of American colleges is the lack of attention that most faculties pay to the growing body of research about how much students are learning and how they could be taught to learn more. Hundreds of studies have accumulated on how undergraduates develop during college and what effects different methods of teaching have on improving critical thinking, moral reasoning, quantitative literacy and other skills vital to undergraduate education.

One would think faculties would receive these findings eagerly. Yet one investigator has found that fewer than 10% of college professors pay any attention to such work when they prepare for their classes. Most faculties seem equally uninterested in research when they review the curriculum.

Apparently, empirical studies command respect only when they are used to investigate institutions and professions other than those to which professors themselves belong.

It is unfortunate that college professors pay so little heed to the research about undergraduate education. If they did, they might encounter some provocative findings, such as the following.

• Despite the hours spent debating different models of general education, the choices faculties make rarely lead to any significant difference in the cognitive development of undergraduates.

• Most college seniors do not think that they have made substantial progress in improving their competence in writing or quantitative methods, and some assessments have found that many students actually regress.

• Students who start college with average critical thinking skills only tend to progress over the next four years from the 50th percentile of their class to approximately the 69th percentile.

• Most undergraduates leave college still inclined to approach unstructured “real life” problems with a form of primitive relativism, believing that there are no firm grounds for preferring one conclusion over another.

• Although most colleges require students to take classes in another language, fewer than 10% of seniors believe they have substantially improved their foreign language skills, and fewer than 15% are enrolled in an advanced class.

• Substantial groups of students, including African-Americans, Hispanics and recruited athletes in major sports, perform well below the levels one would expect based on their high school grades and SAT scores. Although a few colleges have developed successful programs to overcome such underperformance, most do not even try, despite the commitment expressed in many college brochures to “help each student develop to his or her full potential.”

Further studies indicate that problem-based discussion, group study and other forms of active learning produce greater gains in critical thinking than lectures, yet the lecture format is still the standard in most college classes, especially in large universities. Other research has documented the widespread use of other practices that impede effective learning, such as the lack of prompt and adequate feedback on student work, the prevalence of tests that call for memory rather than critical thinking, and the reliance on teaching methods that allow students to do well in science courses by banking on memory rather than truly understanding the basic underlying concepts.

Critics of American colleges typically attribute the failings of undergraduate education to a tendency on the part of professors to neglect their teaching to concentrate on research. In fact, the evidence does not support this thesis, except perhaps in major research universities. Surveys show that most faculty members prefer teaching to research and spend much more time at it. The problem is that faculty are uninterested in their students but that they do too little to explore new and possibly more effective ways of teaching and learning.

Article Tools

One reason for this neglect is that professors are rarely exposed to research on teaching during graduate school. Doctoral training is devoted almost entirely to learning to do research, even though most Ph.D.s who enter academic life spend far more time teaching than they do conducting experiments or writing books. To most faculty members, teaching is an art that is either too simple to require formal training, too personal to be taught to others, or too innate to be conveyed to anyone lacking the necessary gifts. Freshly minted Ph.D.s typically teach the way their favorite professors taught. This pattern introduces a strong conservative bias into college instruction, a bias reinforced by the tendency of many faculties to regard the choice of teaching methods as the exclusive prerogative of individual professors rather than a fit subject for collective deliberation.

Another reason for ignoring educational research is that such work is often threatening to a faculty. Once investigators start assessing how much students are learning, they may conclude that familiar methods of teaching are ineffective and need to be replaced. Such findings are doubly disquieting. They cast a depressing doubt on the value of countless

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classes that cannot be done over. Worse yet, revising courses will undoubtedly force professors to spend many hours of additional time on top of already busy schedules.

College faculties have long been able to ignore educational research and avoid discussion of teaching methods because they risk no adverse consequences as a result. Students will rarely know whether they are learning less than they might or whether they could learn more at another institution. So long as colleges do not charge excessive tuitions and keep abreast of their competitors, offering popular degree programs, providing financial aid, and building facilities, they can continue to attract applicants and graduate satisfied students.

There are signs, however, that colleges may not be able to continue paying so little attention to improving student learning. Changing demands in the economy are forcing employers to pay increasing sums to remedy deficiencies in the writing and computational skills of the college graduates they hire. In addition, more and more work normally performed by college graduates is now being outsourced to other countries. Already, tax returns for several hundred thousand U.S. citizens are being prepared in India; CAT scans are being analyzed in Poland; Microsoft is employing scientists in China; Boeing has engaged the services of engineers in Russia. As this process continues, American graduates will no longer be competing only with themselves but with hordes of ambitious, hard-working young people from countries such as India and China intent on claiming a piece of the world’s most prosperous economy. In this new environment, American students can no longer afford to graduate without the best possible education.

Other organizations have become accustomed to this kind of competition. They have responded by becoming effective learning organizations—that is, organizations that constantly assess their work to identify problems, look for new ways to overcome weaknesses, evaluate these innovations with care, and adopt the methods that work while discarding those that don’t. Colleges urgently need to follow this example.

Properly done, such a process can be rewarding for everyone. The principal beneficiaries will be the students, but professors stand to benefit as well. Experimenting with new and better ways to help students learn can be as engaging for a teacher as experimenting in a laboratory or undertaking an empirical investigation in the social sciences. For academic leaders, trying to initiate a process of enlightened trial and error through continuing self-scrutiny and research may well be the most important challenge they face. Those who succeed will not only gain the lasting satisfaction of helping to improve the lives of their students, but lead the way toward higher-quality undergraduate education. Few educators could aspire to any greater achievement.

Derek Bok, a former president of Harvard University, is the author of the just-published "Our Underachieving Colleges."