SUMMARY NOTES: DE SHARING SESSION – EXPECTATIONS
Present: Jon Blumhardt, Scotty Rhodes, Linda Laine, Cynthia Smith, Marty Nikou, John DeLay, Patrick Patterson, Ron Pine, Jonathan Wong
Friday, October 19  10:00 – 11:15 am

Topics:  Expectations of Students

Instructors as Tech Support

Concern was discussed that some students register for classes without necessary understanding of what is expected of them in terms of technological capabilities (hardware, software, skills), inadequate access to and ability to use necessary programs etc. Several examples were discussed, including the dramatic increase in number of emails from students having technological problems and needing help regarding technology issues. Also was discussion about how under-prepared some students are in terms of technical savvy (as compared to mainland or instructor expectations.) Obstacles students face in terms of knowing how to use the necessary technology clearly hurts retention.

It was decided to try to preempt this by making clearer to all students what technological programs and/or tools they need to be ready to use to succeed in the class e.g. Eluminate, Quick Time, Laulima etc.

Jon Blumhardt offered to create a Technology Orientation presentation – an explanation tutorial/resource – made available to cable students and online students. This will indicate needed technical specs, and include links to resources where students can access *existing* tutorials, explanation pages etc. Will be segmented for different kinds of DE learning (e.g. Cable courses; online courses) so can instructor direct students to relevant portions.

Will need to determine how to deliver (e.g. sending a DVD disc with this info? imbedded in Laulima somehow? Separate web link? Shown at the start of cable classes? a brochure mailed to all registered students? A tutorial they have to watch and indicate they have watched to proceed to end of the tutorial? A tutorial that needs to be completed prior to registering?

Comment was made – students sometimes do not even read their syllabus; even more of an issue that they do not really read over DE course information. Will have to make sure they *read* it.

Also mentioned, range of student abilities- sometimes we assume they are all at the high level of tech savvy; should not be swayed by the most high-end students. Instructor needs to not pitch class technologies expectations too high.

Cynthia will send out an email asking all DE faculty and staff to send suggestions for topics to be covered to Jon to help him in preparation of technical guide.
Understanding DE Culture and expectations

Was also discussed that we need to develop a general explanation (standardized, available to all students) of DE culture since many students do not understand the particular expectations and requirements of DE learning and here again, instructor is often asked to clarify these issues for individual students. There was presentation made and shown for cable courses in the past dealing with ‘how to take a cable course’ – need to build on that idea, update and make available for online students, dealing with issues such as time management, etiquette in communicating with instructor, etiquette in class discussions etc.

Consensus was, many students have not been socialized to DE expectations – and takes a great deal of instructor time to cultivate that one to one. We need to move beyond instructors responsible for all orientation of students (technology, DE culture expectations). Need to standardize this process. Would help students have clearer expectations; help in retention.

Instructors cannot be seen as the personal mentors of students – helping them not only with content, but how to be a distance student, navigate technologies etc. So, creating standard orientation materials is necessary – instructions can direct students with issues and problems to these.

Again- how to impart this once it is created is an issue – posted online? Frontpiece of cable courses? Send out a DE pamphlet to students once they register (if so, who pays?) Or have a required participation in online orientation activity (Flash) prior to registering – with some kind of quiz that evaluates abilities? Finishing the quiz allows student to access the course (you get the password) etc. If using online tools, could even track this and follow up with students who do not carry out this orientation.

A goal for the year is to develop an orientation description to help students be more aware of DE expectations and learning culture. Jon will work on a draft of an orientation presentation for students to include self-diagnose their readiness for distance learning.

Instructor Contact and Communication

The group discussed the fact that there is no clear norm regarding reasonable contact availability and turn around time. Instructors differ. Students seem to have high expectations of immediate response time.

Key here is for instructor to *establish* explicit student expectations. Instructors need to be *very clear* with students regarding their contact availability, as well as response times for messages. Might want to divide this into response times for questions/problems and turn around time for more time-consuming *grading* of work.
Key is for instructors to be explicit to establish student expectations for that class and then abide by these.

Some members indicated that they set up explicit ‘office hours’ online – as a chat format or a time when they are there to respond to emails, promising immediate feedback. Then if students send questions at times other than those, the instructor responds when they can but "no promise" of immediate or rapid response.

Another suggestion was to present a clear timetable for class expectations related to instructor-student communication: deadlines they are to meet, where they should be at a particular date in terms of work done *and* turn around times.

Even possibility down the road is to evaluate student capabilities (e.g. algorhythm programs ala Pandora) to help instructor better understand student learning capabilities and orientation.

Was also mentioned that some publishers are coming out with good diagnostic quizzes which instructors might use for gaging initial student preparation and making clear to students expectations of the class.

Was agreed that being more explicit regarding expectations of student preparedness and what they will have to do/perform as DE students will aid in better retention.

**Dealing with Student Questions**

It was discussed that one of the ways to avoid repeated emails dealing with common or shared concerns or frequent areas where students have questions is to develop a Q and Q blog (FAQ section) for the class. As a student asks a question – the question and response are posted for all to see. This is indexed. Though some students don’t read that and ask the same question anyway – does reduce repetition.

**Testing**

There are things students and instructors should know in using Laulima for exams. Need to develop a running list of hints for instructors in using Laulima, and what to impart to students taking exams in this manner. For example, have to tell students *NOT* to use the back arrow button while taking the exam since it erases the page they are on. Need to build up a resource of collective wisdom of how to test on Laulima.

Cynthia will facilitate that cumulative list of tips/guidelines via email and meetings.

Another important suggestion was that instructors who are sending paper exams should *follow up* with testing centers - ask for an rsvp of receipt, to make sure the paper exams got to the campus *and to the testing center folks*. Was reiterated that sending as PDF attachments is far easier; problem is testing centers will not always print out exams for instructors.
Attachments

The concern was also raised that students are sending work in attachment formats that are not always accessible. Instructors need to be *VERY* clear as to what they can and cannot access, including dealing with students using MAC or PC and be explicit in telling students what formats to use, including possibility of PDF (if there is not going to be grading/comments added). Problem is growing since campus computers are often not as advanced as students – thus problems with compatibility. Will work on some suggested common language to help instructors frame this expectation in their classes.

Marty ended the session with positive observations about the opportunity to learn new technologies, and a special thank you to Jon for all of the help he provided in developing the course and dealing with student needs.