Distance Education Sharing Meeting – Best Practices List
Thursday, April 14    2:30 – 3:35

Attending: Marty Nikou, Ralph Kam, Mike Ferguson, Mike Barros, Norman Takeya, Linda Laine, Cynthia Smith, Gregg Grewell, Kara Kam-Kalani,

The group discussed additional points to add to the ‘Best Practice’ list, suggestions compiled from meetings throughout the year. The group also indicated **new** categories to expand on for future sessions next year, as well as wording changes and additional tips to add.

**(add) Cable Classes**
- Try to build in an early assignment or quiz right away to make sure that students get engaged early on to avoid trap of procrastination.

- Have students do work right away on Laulima or emailed assignments to engage them online. Easier for them to get behind and not be disciplined if they think the class only consists of viewing on TV; build in – early on – interaction via Laulima.

**(add) Keeping up with the competition**
- Should keep an eye on what colleagues teaching similar class on other campuses are doing: be aware of what colleagues expect of students for similar courses. (Ideally knowing this could be the basis for collaboration with colleagues on other campuses.)

- Perhaps keep an eye on Rate a Prof to get a sense of how students view the class; the kinds of comparisons being made or complaints or areas of strength being discussed.

- Be more visible to students, sharing who you are as a teacher etc using Laulima profile capabilities. Students like to know who their instructors are.

- Take an online class from another peer or campus to observe how others teach DE, to learn from new methods as well as enhance awareness of student perspective.

General comments: Given increased numbers of online offerings from other campuses and increased ability of students to shop and choose, should be aware of and keep pace with what is occurring on other campuses. All instructors have to be more aware of intensifying competition and consequent need to advertise and promote the class.

It was noted that in terms of Cable classes, system coordination efforts are made to avoid or minimize repetition and competition of cable offerings between different campuses; however there is no such agreement regarding online classes.
Getting Students to get in contact early, and stay in contact

One area where there needs to be more discussion and sharing of strategies is how to stress and make clear to students that they must check email regularly. This is especially important in cable classes where they might not realize computer work is required, don’t read email and know what is going on week to week, and they fall far behind. Might assume that they can just watch when they want on TV, don’t keep track of class assignments, and fall critically behind esp. regarding online component. Email is primary basis for communication and updates from instructors, but some students do not check frequently enough. So need to make clear they must use email tools early on and consistently.

The group quickly talked about ways to do this:

- This need is stated on Cable orientation materials.
- Use ‘Announcements’ to increase their awareness.
- Make clear in the syllabus what expectations are.
- Make clear if they rely on personal email account and do not regularly check UH mail, should have UH mail forwarded to personal account.
- Or, some instructors mandate that they must use UH mail for their correspondence.
- Have early assignments and instructor follow-up if they do not do the first assignment
- Utilize ‘early alert system’ process for follow up with students not engaged.

It was discussed that to encourage engagement and have students see worth of work being done, instructors need to provide timely feedback and comments. Students see work as less valuable and perhaps less motivated to do it if they a) don’t get work back from the instructor, b) get it back weeks later or end of semester and/or c) get back work with no feedback, no comments, no teaching response.

Question was discussed – how much should an instructor remind the student?
It was noted there is a difficult balance to strike between providing a lot of guidance and structuring time for students (e.g. lots of reminders regarding deadlines) versus expecting them to be responsible; some students are new to distance learning and need reminders, others are lazy and become too dependent on instructor reminders. Difficult to know when one is creating a dependency on instructor versus cultivating individual responsibility. Instructors should be conscious of needed balance.

(add) Be clear on instructor response time?
One key issue that instructors need to be clear about with students is how fast they will respond to student emails.

- Every instructor should make *clear* the instructor timeline for replies, for example if not intending on doing online grading over the weekend, make that explicitly clear to students.
- Can use an UH Webmail auto-reply to remind students not to expect rapid response over the weekend e.g. set up on Friday aft and remove on Monday.
• Should let them know if going to be unusual delay in response time so they don’t panic.
• Should maintain a courteous tone to establish standard expected of student communication style
• Be consistent in tone with students, not moody, not unpredictable.

In terms of topics to address next year, it was agreed there is a need for more training sessions with Eliminate. Was suggested that perhaps some sessions be conducted over the summer when faculty have more time. Cynthia will pass these requests on to Jonathan.

Final points – some faculty shared that they had problems getting paper exams back promptly from Kapiolani and Windward. Cynthia will pass this information on to Hanwell as well as the Distance Coordinators from those campuses.