

FACULTY GUIDE

Teaching an Online Course *Tips from faculty who've been there!*

Sometimes the best resources come from within our own university – maybe even from the office next door! We asked UNA online instructors who are actively involved in offering exemplary courses what tips they would offer to faculty who teach or are considering teaching an online course.

Katie Kinney



Dr. Katie Kinney uses the reporting feature in ANGEL to keep up with her students and encourage them to stay on track. "This semester I'm trying something new," said Dr. Kinney. "I'm running a report every Monday morning to see who's not logged in from the week before." If a student has not logged in, Dr. Kinney sends an e-mail message to that student, such as this example from the first week of the semester:

Hi there,

I ran a report this morning on students who'd not logged in to our EDT 602 course yet, and your name was generated in that report. Wanted to see if there's anything I can do to help.

Thanks,

Dr. Kinney

(Continued on page 2)

SPRING 2014

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*"Any sufficiently advanced technology
is indistinguishable from magic."
- Arthur C. Clarke*

'Fear of Missing Out' is keynote address for conference

We live everyday intertwined with and often overwhelmed by the technologies that have been designed to make our lives easier. As technology evolves at a dizzying pace, the "fear of missing out" has become a commonplace term for social anxiety related to lost opportunities for interactions or experiences if we let go of these technologies. Do we need to let go? Do we participate as much as we can simply because we can? What are we really afraid of missing out on?

In the keynote address of the March 18 UNA Distance Learning/Technology Conference, Phylise

Banner will explore the intersection of emerging technologies and pedagogical approaches as she



shares her insight into the "fear of missing out," and her passion for mindfulness within the context of teaching and learning with emerging technology. The conference, held in the Performance Center on campus, will begin at 8:30 a.m. The

keynote address is scheduled for 10:10 a.m. (See page 6 for full schedule).

(Continued on page 5)

Teaching an Online Course (Continued from page 1)

Dr. Kinney, assistant professor of Elementary Education, says that she hopes this will foster a sense of community and lessen the feeling of isolation in the course, and that it will help students stay on top of their work.

Andrea Hunt

Dr. Andrea Hunt uses technology to help achieve her goals for the course. She said, "I use technology in all of my courses. I always begin with my unit or module goals and student learning outcomes and go from there. What do I want students to do? What kinds of teaching techniques and class activities will help them achieve the student learning outcomes? How will I assess their learning? How might technology factor into this? Sometimes this might mean incorporating different forms of media to help students visualize a concept or apply a theory, or it might be using online discussion forums to assess their ability to synthesize class material. I see technology as one tool that might help students achieve the learning outcomes."



Dr. Hunt does not record full lectures, but she does use recordings in her classes. "I am really into Camtasia right now," she said. "I was hesitant at first to record myself, but have gotten really positive feedback from students. I use little snippets titled 'Hunt's Weekly Highlights' and focus more on introducing new material and reminding students of upcoming assignments."

In addition to Camtasia and the ANGEL LMS, Dr. Hunt also uses Padlet (padlet.com), which she said is an online space where students can work in groups and post notes to each other or use it individually for portfolios, photo essays, and other creative assignments.

Dr. Hunt, assistant professor of Sociology and Family Studies, said that teaching online is both rewarding and challenging. "Many of us, me included, often underestimate the amount of time that goes into course development," she said. "I would advise that new faculty seek out the Distance Learning staff or other faculty who have taught online and talk through their

ideas for the course. We can learn so much from each other by sharing our ideas. Talking with others also helps us in conceptualizing how the course goals, student learning outcomes, interactive components, and assessment all fit together."

"I think one of the best things I do in my online and face-to-face classes is creating an environment where students are interacting and engaged with the content, with their peers, and with me," said Dr. Hunt. She acknowledged that this is more challenging in online classes due to the separation of time and space. She said, "Above all, I want my online students to know that I am there guiding them through the course and that it isn't just them and a computer."

Joan Parris

Dr. Joan Parris, professor of Computer Information Systems, uses many of the same methods for all her classes, whether they are online or traditional face-to-face classes. "I always add a detailed course calendar to the last few pages of my course syllabus," said Dr. Parris. "The detail shown includes every assignment for the entire semester: due dates, test dates, dates when chapters or topics should be covered, etc. All of this information is also within my ANGEL course (in a folder within a module, on the course calendar, etc.), but I want my students to print this detailed calendar out and have it readily available to them."

Dr. Parris also believes it is important to have material available to students from the first day. "I have everything opened (except tests, of course!) within the ANGEL course from the first day of the semester," she said. "Students can review every requirement or assignment in the course either in the ANGEL course or in my detailed calendar and get a good picture of what is expected of them through the entire semester. There should be no surprises of new requirements added throughout the semester in my classes."

Student schedules (school, work, home) are a special concern for Dr. Parris. "We have so many undergraduate students who work a lot of hours while going to school," she said. "And, so many of our graduate students work full time while going to school, and they often have positions where out-of-town travel is a frequent part of their job. These students need to know at the beginning of the semester the



(Continued on page 3)

Teaching an Online Course (Continued from page 2)

assignments and due dates so that they can more successfully juggle their work responsibilities and school work."

Dr. Parris remembers her own school days when planning her courses. "That is why I open everything from the beginning of the semester," she said. "I remember too well how difficult it was in my doctoral work to juggle my school work while I was trying to teach at the high school level full time. I loved my professors who gave me the full picture of the entire semester's work from the beginning! It was a little bit harder to love the professors who only gave us a small picture of the course at the beginning of the semester and then kept adding new assignments with short deadlines all through the semester!"

Annie Dillon

Cumulative, multi-part assignments – such as using a final project in place of a final exam – work for Dr. Annie Dillon. "One of the best assignments that I require in my graduate class [EEX 642, Methods and Materials for Students with Severe Disabilities] for characteristics of those with severe disabilities is to create a paradigm with at least 10 major characteristics. Each of the 10 characteristics include two major headings or subcharacteristics. It works beautifully as a final exam or a culminating activity for the class," she said. "And it is really easy to grade using a rubric."

Student reaction has been very positive, said Dr. Dillon, a professor of Special Education.

Janelle Sorrell

Assistant Professor of Nursing Janelle Sorrell names the files and activities in her course so that they will group together in the gradebook and be easy to find in the content management system on eCollege. "This seems like common sense, but when I first started, I named discussions and assignments with the title of the activity (Quality Improvement in Healthcare; Historical Images of Nurses)," she said. "I found that it works much better to name it 'Discussion – QI in Healthcare,' 'Discussion – Historical Images,' etc. All the similar



names are grouped together in the gradebook so that I assign the weights it is very easy to click on all seven items and have the weight distributed evenly."

Ms. Sorrell continued, "When I revise a discussion or activity, I add the date to the metadata (for example, SP 14 Discussion – QI in Healthcare), so that I know which is the latest version in the content managed list, since it saves everything." She said that this organization saves her a lot of time.

Another method Ms. Sorrell employs is the checklist. "I have a checklist that I use at the beginning of every semester to make sure I didn't forget to add anything to the course. Sometimes I need to add categories to my Doc Sharing section or post a list of people assigned to each work group. The checklist helps me remember to do this so that I don't have to scramble to do it at the last minute just before the assignment opens."

Ian Loeppky

In the creation of the syllabus for MU 233 (Music in World Cultures), Dr. Ian Loeppky wanted there to be a strong writing component; he said that in the curriculum, and as a sophomore-level course, MU 233 is ideally placed for this (after students' freshman year, but before they do their junior-level Music History courses).



He said that at least 50% of the course content in this course is just that; it has turned into a "learn to write efficiently and effectively about music" course.

Dr. Loeppky, associate professor of Music, explained: "I tell them that, in lieu of the verbal discussion that would happen in a face-to-face classroom, they are required to post a five-to-ten sentence Discussion Post each week on all or part of the material that we are studying. They have to make sure that their posts 'must not be so general as to be vague, nor so specific to your situation to be irrelevant; the best posts apply the general concepts discussed to your specific experiences.' In addition to this, they are not given credit for any post that contains more than three errors of either grammar, spelling, or punctuation; I coach them through this if they are having difficulty, or course, and insist that they proofread (and spell-check) each post before submitting. These posts act as virtual 'attendance' for the class. Later on in the semester, they are required to do a two-page

(Continued on page 4)

Teaching an Online Course (Continued from page 3)

report and a final Fieldwork Project (10 pages); the latter is broken down into a Thesis Statement, First Draft and Final Draft."

Dr. Loeppky said that online Discussion Posts have proven to be a very effective way of learning to write about the course content in small 5-to-10-sentence chunks, and all in preparation for the larger projects at the end. "If the medium is the message," he said, "I'm convinced that this online forum works *better* than the traditional classroom model for learning how to write."

Vicki Pierce

Dr. Vicki Pierce has found a way to make Discussion Boards easier to manage. "I sometimes divide large classes into smaller groups for discussion posts," she said. "It makes reading all of the posts more manageable."



The assistant professor and department chair in Traditional Nursing also had a tip for grading those posts. "I have several discussion posts opportunities that are open for weeks at a time. I

use a rubric to grade the posts and it can be labor intensive to grade all of the comments that are posted by each student," Dr. Pierce said. "I have found that it is helpful to make a spread sheet with the grading criteria across the top and the student's names down the side. I try to read the posts as they are written and keep a record of points earned. Then, I simply add each student's points after the discussion board is closed."

Dr. Pierce said she finds it helpful to stress time management techniques with her students. "For example, it is a good idea to tell students to put the due dates for all class assignments and quizzes in their smart phone/tablet or in some other calendar format."

She includes a link to the UNA library in her online courses, and encourages students to use it often.

Larry Bates

It's a good idea for faculty members to take an online course, said Dr. Larry Bates, associate professor, Psychology. "I've take three free courses through Coursera, and learned a few tips from doing this . . . not to mention that I got to experience a bit of what my

students experience in an online environment."

Dr. Bates uses online quizzes to maximum effect. "I tend to use online quizzes in all of my classes (online, hybrid, and traditional), and make them count just enough to get decent participation, so that they are spreading out their studying across the semester instead of just doing all-night study-fest the night before the tests." He also allows students to drop about ¼ of their online quiz grades (which count only about 10% of their total grade) specifically to cover any technical problems they might have, sickness, etc. Dr. Bates explained, "This keeps me from having to be bombarded with complaints about the internet going down while they were taking a quiz and brings a bit more peace to my life."



He said, "I also have two due dates . . . a regular due date, and an absolute due date by which they can submit something a bit late (say a week) and receive a modest penalty. Again, it cuts down on the amount of time that I have to respond to appeals for more time due to technical issues."

A sort of "Flipped Classroom" approach works for Dr. Bates in his blended (or hybrid) classes: "I tend to post most of the lectures online and utilize the classroom for doing demonstrations, holding discussions, or delving into complex issues more deeply."

An online class involves much more preparation the year before the class, said Dr. Bates: "Just getting everything organized, learning the technology, and transferring content to an online environment is substantial. This should be common knowledge but the work load is probably much greater than faculty think it will be, at least it was for me."

He also mentioned the importance of letting students get accustomed to the online environment. "The first three, four weeks of classes is always pretty hectic because your students are trying to get used to your specific online teaching environment," Dr. Bates said. "I probably spend a couple of hours each day dealing with online issues of some sort for the first month of

(Continued on page 5)

Teaching an Online Course (Continued from page 4)

an online class, then it tends to settle down a bit. All of us structure our classes differently, and place content in different areas for our classes, and this causes some confusion among the students until they also get comfortable with where to find things, with how to get their computers to be compatible, etc. This requires some patience and understanding on our part."

Cathy Malone

Assistant Professor of Nursing Cathy Malone wants her students to feel welcome. "One of the best and easiest things I do is to have an 'Introduce Yourself' discussion forum that opens when the course first opens," she said. "The students introduce themselves and tell a little something about themselves and I respond personally (in the forum) to each one of them. This makes them feel very comfortable and that I am 'there' for them. I get many positive comments about my 'warm welcome' and also how much they enjoy learning a little bit about their classmates. Just this semester, a new student posted that she was so surprised at how great it was to get to know her classmates that way and that she felt like she had 'chatted' with everyone much more than she could/would have in a traditional classroom format."



Ms. Malone also uses email to communicate from the outset. "Another thing I do to make them feel welcome is to send an email to each of them to welcome them," she said. "I ask them to reply to me to make sure the email address in the course email function is the one they most often use so that they will receive email communication from me throughout the semester."

"I think the most effective way I use technology in my online classes is the use of narrated PowerPoints," said Ms. Malone. "I have received positive feedback about the effectiveness of those presentations as opposed to regular PowerPoints. I attach the outline view of the text so that they can print it and 'take notes' just as they would in the classroom." Ms. Malone uses Articulate for her narrated PowerPoints, and likes Camtasia for screen capture that can be narrated.

"Another thing that I do and like is to require some assignments utilizing the library journal databases," added Ms. Malone. "The students must select and summarize articles related to their 'big' clinical project on which they write a paper. I have separate due dates for the 'webliography' assignments during the semester so that the students can start building the literature search for their paper. The students post the link to the articles so that all others can read the entire article if they desire."

Ms. Malone said she appreciates the informative sources and tremendous support afforded by the staff at the library and the Center for Writing Excellence. "Leigh Thompson is enrolled in my course as our 'Class Librarian' and I create a unit in which she has a discussion forum for the students to ask her questions related to use of the library databases and creating links to articles," she said. "Leigh and I create a Library Guide specifically for my course and I post a link to that so that students can have more sources for help related to use of the databases, APA format, etc." Ms. Thompson works in Collier and is a librarian and assistant professor whose specialties include library instruction, outreach, reference, and distance learning.

Ms. Malone has been with the distance learning program for many years, almost since the very beginning. She is a strong advocate for online learning and the rewards it can produce. "I would tell a new faculty member to realize that teaching online is wonderful and fun, however, it is not easier! A quality course takes quite a lot of time to build and maintain."

The work is hard but the rewards are many. Thanks to all of our online faculty who work to make their courses the best that they can be!

Fear of Missing Out (Continued from page 1)

Ms. Banner is the Director of Online Teaching and Learning at Union Graduate College, where she is working to expand online offerings through a mindful institution-wide approach to program, course, and faculty development in alignment with teaching and learning effective practices and the Community of Inquiry framework.

She has been working in the field of online teaching and learning since 1997, planning, designing, developing, and delivering online courses, programs, and faculty development initiatives. As an online learning evangelist, she actively seeks out opportunities to experiment with emerging technologies in order to best serve faculty and students, and to create communities of lifelong learners.

She is featured regularly at regional, national and international conferences, speaking on the topics of online teaching and learning, faculty development, instructional strategy, experience design, social media, information visualization and GIS technologies. She also teaches Digital Storytelling online for SUNY Institute of Technology, and in person for the Academy for Lifelong Learning at Empire State College.

She is an Adobe Education Leader, STC Fellow, performance storyteller, avid angler, aviation enthusiast, and currently training to be a private pilot. She is also the proud owner of a 1967 Amphicar.

Please make plans to attend this exciting (free) conference! Reservations are kindly requested; to reserve your space, please e-mail bhwilson@una.edu.

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA
DISTANCE LEARNING/TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE**

**Tuesday, March 18, 2014
(Performance Center, Guillot University Center)**

8:00 to 8:30 a.m.:

Coffee service; Introduction and announcements (8:25)

8:30 to 9:10 a.m.:

"Course Redesign for Student Success"

Dr. Darlene Turner-White, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood, Athens State University

9:20 to 9:40 a.m.:

"Collaborate"

Dr. Dennis Balch, Associate Professor of Management, College of Business

9:40 to 10:00 a.m.:

"Adapting Traditional Pedagogy to a Virtual Classroom"

Dr. Pam Fernstrom Chaney, Professor of Special Education, College of Education

10:10 to 11:10 a.m.:

"Fear of Missing Out," keynote address

Ms. Phylise Banner, Director of Online Teaching and Learning at Union Graduate College

11:20 to 11:40 a.m.:

"Role-Playing in Online Classes"

Dr. Andrea Hunt, Assistant Professor of Sociology, College of Arts and Sciences

11:40 to 12:00:

"Virtual Tour Leads to Actual Success"

Dr. Kristy Oden, Assistant Professor of Nursing, College of Nursing

12:00 to 12:30:

"Copyright in the Classroom: Fair Use, Licensed Resources, and the TEACH act"

panel presentation by Mr. Brian Ford, Dr. Chris Maynard, Mr. Jonathan M. Simms, and Dr. Jill Simpson

12:30:

Lunch

(Banquet Hall)