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What do you like most about online teaching?

The aspect of online teaching that I enjoy most is giving the opportunity to pursue college courses to individuals who are unable to attend a traditional classroom environment. The level of professionalism in my online classes is very high. Successful online students are highly motivated, mature, self disciplined and naturally curious. There are often seasoned professionals in the class who are taking a course to expand or update their skill set or achieve certification for a promotion. These students are great role models and mentors to those who are just starting out in their education and/or careers. It is a delightful cohort to teach!

What have been some of the challenges?

I teach technology based courses such as web development, business spreadsheet applications, and data analytics. In these courses, it is difficult to assure that everyone is on the same platform, with the required hardware and software needed for the course, while still keeping the course accessible to a broad variety of students. To do this, I work with ITS to make sure the software is available on the Citrix server, test my assignments on a variety of platforms (Mac, Chromebook, PC), and encourage students to contact the ITS Help Desk when things are not working properly, and we all work together to find solutions.

In general, the biggest challenge is student engagement. There are always a certain number of students who are not ready for the self discipline of online learning. Some can be brought along through communication and encouragement, but many will not succeed. I set clear expectations of the time it takes to be successful in my courses (on average 9 hours per week), and clear deadlines for assignments, discussions and quizzes. I think it is important to accept a lower success rate as an instructor and allow students to learn that self discipline, time management, and personal responsibility are much of what college teaches and are an essential component to online learning. Those who are successful will be well prepared for the 21st century workforce where independent learning is highly valued.

What are you doing/doing differently that makes your course interesting or unique?

I start each module with a comic strip and an introductory paragraph. This is my way of making the course a little more engaging and inserting some of my personality into the

course. I talk about why the material in the module is important and give some perspective on how it will benefit them to master it.

I strive to make my courses extremely well organized. There is a structure to the course and to each module. Students know what to expect each week, and successful students quickly adjust their schedules to accommodate the requirements. There are no surprises.

I also create video demonstrations of the lessons using Camtasia and posting through Ensemble. This is the closest I have found to giving students the equivalent experience of my in-class teaching.

What would you say to a student who is considering online learning?

Think of online learning as independent study. You will need to take responsibility for reading all of the material, watching videos, and completing all discussions, assignments and quizzes on time. This is a big commitment. If you are taking an online class because you do not have *time* to come to campus, then this may not be the right time for you to take a class.

I would also encourage you to communicate regularly with your instructor. I tell my students to email me everyday if they need to. Do not wait until you are behind to ask questions.

What would you say to a colleague who is considering redeveloping a course for the online platform?

Think about structure first. What will the flow of each module be. For example: read introduction, watch video, read textbook, complete assignment, take quiz. Stick to that structure so that students know what to expect. Do not assign more than you will be able to grade conscientiously. It's easy to add assignments, discussions, and other activities, but if you will not be able to read the submissions critically and give feedback, then they become busywork. Be extremely clear about what is due and when it is due and what your late policies are. Be creative. If there is some aspect of your course that will be hard to convey online, try to think of a new way of presenting the material or a new way of asking students to engage in the material. For example, students were having trouble understanding what I was asking them for in terms of a wireboard for an app design, so I posted my hand scribbled solution and asked them to just do some quick sketches of their ideas on paper, take a pic and post to a discussion. I was able to give them quick feedback, and they were able to learn from each other. The next

semester, I formalized the process. As I am not an artist, I had to be brave in posting my hand drawn design, but doing so enabled them to share as well.