Learning Technologies & Assessment @ LOYOLA

Activities and Projects Update

Part of the mission of LTA is to provide faculty with updates on programs involving both teaching with technology and assessment issues. We hope this brief overview of our activities serves to inform and also pique interest in new topics on teaching and assessment.

FLU PANDEMIC COURSE CONSIDERATIONS

The Center for Disease Control recently declared that a "global pandemic of [Swine Flu] was underway " (http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu). Officially named H1N1 or novel influenza A, the flu that made international news at the end of the spring semester has not gone away; instead, it is likely to continue having an impact on Chicago and our campus. How ready are we, as Loyola University Chicago academics, for an outbreak of flu that may force us to be away from the physical classroom or prevent our students from attending class for a week? Or two? New guidelines for universities from the CDC recommend that students, faculty or staff who live either on or off campus and who have an influenza-like illness, either H1N1 or seasonal flu, should self-isolate (i.e., stay away from others) in their dorm room or home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities (their fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

While the University and health agencies are working together to provide updates and make immunizations available, those responsible for academic content delivery have a different set of concerns: If I contract the flu and have to be away from campus, how will I continue to conduct my classes? How will my students keep up with lectures and hand in work if they are not in attendance?

Solutions to many of these issues can be found in Blackboard. Students can be given access to lecture materials (in a variety of formats); faculty can set up a feature that allows students to turn in assignments that the faculty member can access via the Blackboard Grade Center; faculty can record simple messages and parts of lectures and post them for student access; students can meet in virtual groups to collaborate on projects and share information. All of these procedures are relatively easy to use and do not require expensive equipment. For example, the podcasting features built into Loyola's version of Blackboard allow a faculty member to make a short recording with only a USB microphone. The settings can be selected that allow students to reply back with their own recording, again with just the aid of a simple microphone.

The *Help Materials for Faculty* linked from the ITS website offer step-by-step instructions for many of the features discussed in this article. Find them online at: http://luc.edu/blackboard/

Additionally, LTA and ITS staff are available to assist faculty with setting up the various course components that allow for distribution and access of materials. For guidance with what tools to use for online lectures, podcasts and assignments, contact learningtech@luc.edu or blackboard@luc.edu.

For campus updates on H1N1, check the website at: http://www.luc.edu/erp/h1n1.shtml. This would be a good website to share with your students so they, too, have current information and understand isolation procedures.

2009 SLATE CONFERENCE

Each fall, SLATE (the midwest Blackboard support group) hosts a conference at the University of Chicago Gleacher Center (downtown) for technicians, instructional designers and faculty involved in online and blended learning. The conference begins on Thursday, October 15 at noon and goes through Friday afternoon. Sessions in previous conferences have included presentations on synchronous and asynchronous communication tools in Blackboard, discussion on effective blended and online course elements, and procedures for online assessment, to name a few.

LTA will be offering three "scholarships" to the conference again this year. If you are interested in applying for one of the scholarships, send an email request to learningtech@luc.edu and state why you think the conference would be a benefit to you. Participants will be selected based on their stated interest. Scholarships will be announced by September 15.

Even if you are not among those selected for a scholarship, consider attending. The conference is local, inexpensive and informative. Last year, Loyola had more attendees than any other university, including the host institution. Those who attended felt it was well worth their time. For more information about SLATE and the upcoming conference, check out the group's website at: http://slategroup.uchicago.edu/.

Assessment Reports

Each academic unit is required to file an annual assessment report with the Office of the Provost. The Office of Learning Technologies and Assessment has been charged with collecting, recording and reviewing these reports and assisting units with their assessment needs. A reporting of unit plans, annual reports and assessment methods is now available online at: http://www.luc.edu/learningtech/Assessment_at_Loyola.shtml.

For questions about assessment and student learning outcomes, contact LTA at assessment@luc.edu.

Robert Rotenberg, keynote speaker for fall 2009 FOT, is the author of the acclaimed book The Art and Craft of College Teaching. *Several copies of his book will be given as door prizes at the event.*

Exploring POSSIBILITIES

"We envision the Loyola University Chicago teaching environment as a forum for implementing excellence in pedagogically-sound methods for teaching students and assessing their learning. "

Blended Learning In Higher Education

Members of the Office of Learning Technologies and Assessment attended the Sloan-C Workshop on Blended Learning in Higher Education in April. Blended learning can be defined as "courses that integrate online with traditional face-to-face class activities in a planned, pedagogically valuable manner and where a portion of face-to-face time is replaced by online activity "(Picciano, 2009).

Blended learning has become the preferred mode of instruction for students in recent years; students enjoy having the flexibility to do some of their coursework online and outside of the classroom, but they also value the teaching presence and the facilitation of communication that is brought about in a face-to-face learning environment. From a pedagogical standpoint, blended learning provides several distinct advantages over strictly face-to-face or online instruction. As instructors, we know that people learn differently. It is recommended that instruction "should use multiple modalities that allow learners to engage in ways they prefer/have interest/have ability in while also challenging them to learn in other ways where they have less preference, interest or ability "(Picciano, 2009). Blended learning environments allow instructors to tailor their learning activities for these differing learning styles.

Integrating blended learning activities into a course can be relatively seamless and transparent to students. In fact, many students have already participated in a blended learning environment without realizing it. To start, you may want to consider extending the discussion that you have in your face-to-face classroom by creating a discussion board in Blackboard where students can reflect on the content that was covered in class or to raise points that were not addressed due to time constraints. If there is content that is supplemental to a course and no time to cover it in class, consider creating a narrated powerpoint, a podcast, or a web page that conveys the information so that students can review the lesson outside of class when it's convenient for them. These are just a few examples of how blended learning activities extend the realm of the classroom beyond the physical confines of a strictly face-to-face class.

If you are interested in learning more about blended learning, or are wondering what blended learning activities or opportunities might fit into your curriculum, staff in the LTA would be happy to review your course with you and provide you with additional information. Email learningtech@luc.edu for more information.

Picciano, A.G. (2009). Blending with Purpose: The Multimodal Model. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 13(1), 7-17.

For an interesting presentation extrapolating the discussion of blended learning, check out the Educause slideshare at: http://www.slideshare.net/drvdiaz/blended-learning-educause-sw-regional-2008

Looking Ahead

Chris Dede, featured speaker for the January 13, 2010 FOT

Mark your calendars for January 13, 2010. Harvard professor Christopher Dede will be the keynote speaker for the spring session of Focus on Teaching. Dede, the Timothy E. Wirth Professor in Learning Technologies, is renowned, among other things, for his expertise on evolving student learning styles and their impact on teaching and learning at the university level. To round out the day, a series of breakout sessions is also being planned; there will be a call for session proposals mid-semester.

Upcoming Events

2009 SLATE Conference
October 15-16
University of Chicago
Gleacher Center
http://slategroup.uchicago.edu/slateconference.html

Collaboration In Learning
October 7, 2009 — March 25, 2010
http://www.luc.edu/collaborationinlearning

Spring 2010 Focus on Teaching
January 13, 2010

Contact Us:

We are always interested in hearing from you regarding what you or your faculty are doing in the virtual and physical classroom. Please let us know how we can assist you in moving your department goals forward.

http://www.luc.edu/learningtech

learningtech@luc.edu

CHICAGO AREA ASSESSMENT GROUP (CAAG)

After attending a Higher Learning Commission assessment conference in February 2008, LTA realized a need for collaboration among area institutions to clarify and demystify campus assessment efforts. In April 2008, LUC hosted the first meeting of representatives from four-year institutions seeking to share strategies for institutional and departmental assessment. Informally named the Chicago Area Assessment Group (CAAG), campus representatives have come together to share challenges, triumphs and other experiences associated with integrating assessment into higher education. The group has met six times to date with a different campus hosting each meeting. In addition to the meetings, group members share resources online using a wiki. Because the current participants of the group hail from such diverse institutions, the topics and discussions are enlightened and grounded.

Meeting topics have included:

- Implications of the Spellings Commissions' call for accountability;
- Assessment templates;
- Interpretation of HLC standards;
- Incorporation of software into the assessment process;
- Differences among institutional cultures.

CAAG has potential for providing a pool of resources to draw from as we strive towards improving our assessment strategies and processes. If you would like to join or want more information about CAAG, contact assessment@luc.edu.