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The Saga of Two Professors Co-Teaching a Blended Course

Dr. Murray Blank
University of Maryland University College

Dr. Conrad Boyle
University of Maryland University College

Abstract

This is a serious, but somewhat light-hearted, description of **what** and **how** two rather senior, and rather seasoned, professors approached a blended course (even though their self-interests were heavily involved), and a summarization of their "lessons learned" including some how-to suggestions.

The Situation

This is a serious, but somewhat light-hearted, description of **what** and **how** two rather senior, and rather seasoned, professors approached a blended course (even though their self-interests were heavily involved), and a summarization of their "lessons learned" including some how-to suggestions.

Our professors - the authors in this case - had used up all but three credits each that the university would allow them to teach in any one year. Unfortunately, the university only offered six credit courses. These two were facing the possibility they would each "leave three credits on the table," and this meant a few thousand dollars they needed to live in their accustomed life style. Fortunately for them, they had several unique skills and a myriad of other talents (they state this here for the record, but they do it with great modesty). They were exceedingly familiar with the courses in their program - they could, and had, taught several of them. One of the pair had many semesters' experience teaching on-line courses in this program, while the other one had about an equal amount of experience teaching blended courses; therefore, it seemed they could pair in some way to co-teach a blended course. Their respective qualifications in the on-line and face-to-face environments were supported by the generous praise and evaluations they had received from their prior students. One Program Director in the program had a "supply and demand" problem - there were more students wanting the blended course than there were local instructors available to teach it. Our intrepid professors had the answer - one blended course co-taught by two instructors; one would handle the on-line portion and the other would deal with the in-classroom portion. Six credits, two professors, sharing the load (and the money).

Description of the Program

Our two professors teach in the University of Maryland University College's (UMUC) MBA program. Although this particular program is just now approaching maturity, it has been in existence for nearly ten years. It began as a totally on-line, distance learning program, designed for working adults regardless of their geographic location. Students enter the program in cohort groups and, for the most part, stay together in these cohorts through graduation.

There are seven, six-credit courses in UMUC's MBA program, plus a one-semester orientation for entering students who have not taken the GMAT or GRE. The courses are:

- The Manager in Organizations and Society
- Managing People and Groups in the Global Society
- The Economics of Management Decisions
- Managing Projects, Operations, and Information Systems
- Marketing Management and Innovation
- Managing Global Business
- Managing Strategy in the Global Marketplace

Our intrepid professors teach the marketing course (the fifth one down in the list above). As you will see, they have had lengthy careers in both business and academia qualifying them for the subject. (See the later "**Who Are the Instructors and What Did They Bring To the Table?"** section and their bios).

Recently, there has been a growing student demand for MBA courses with a face-to-face component, in addition to the usual on-line version. Although UMUC still calls these versions "hybrids," they are truly "blended" courses. Initially, there were five face-to-face sessions in a thirteen-week, six-credit, blended course. This was coupled with approximately the same amount of on-line work as the students in the totally on-line courses had. For the Fall, 2008 term, the MBA program shifted to ten-week sessions, retaining the six-credit format. In this format, a blended course would have four face-to-face classroom sessions. These blended courses are all taught locally in Maryland, near UMUC's parent location. As a result of this demand, the need for "local" instructors has also grown.

Why Was There This Problem?

UMUC's Graduate School's policy holds that their professors may not teach more than 30 "on-load" credits, plus 15 "overload" credits, annually. Simple mathematics shows that one cannot maximize his/her income when teaching six-credit courses with a 45-credit limitation without leaving three credits "on the table." As stated above, accompanying the professors' desire to maximize income, the program faced an increasing demand for blended courses locally. The Program Directors were busy hiring local instructors, but the demand outstripped the supply. (Aside: Isn't that a good marketing line?) The Program Directors became willing to innovate in order to meet the demand, but they had to maintain the quality of classroom instruction.

At the suggestion of our two professors, the Program Director for the Marketing course agreed to a co-teaching arrangement in order to staff a blended course to be delivered at UMUC's Dorsey Run location (a suburban area near the Baltimore-Washington Marshall International Airport). Even though she was at the point of extremis, the Program Director also saw a unique opportunity to both staff a course with experienced instructors and to try a different approach (this was also fortunate for our professors).

A Wee Bit of Background

As mentioned earlier, the two professors have experienced the teaching environment at several levels for several years. They both taught in this particular program for five or more years. And both had experienced team teaching or co-teaching with differing amounts of success! It's well that we briefly discuss these experiences.

The department encourages newly-hired instructors to first co-teach with experienced instructors. In these co-teach situations, they receive some guidance from their Program Director, but they are pretty much left to their own devices as to the division of labor. Professor Boyle's first co-teaching colleague proposed

(and eventually mandated) that they divide the course 50-50, with one taking the first half of the semester, and the other taking the last half. There remains some question as to what the one instructor would be doing while he was "off-duty." According to Dr. Boyle, this arrangement proved to be relatively unsatisfactory for both instructors and the students. The transition had flaws, and evaluations by the students were marginal.

Dr. Blank's experience had some similarity and some differences. He and his co-teacher divided the course 50-50, but the division was along the lines of the two instructors' self-determined strengths. In addition, they divided the grading of each assignment between themselves, although they guarded to insure neither of them graded the same student more than 50% of the assignments. They felt quite comfortable with this experience, to the point they presented a paper on it. (Ross, Evanchik, & Blank, 2002).

Basic to Blank's experience was his and his colleague's need to be continuously involved with the students and their learning. As a result, he read the students' postings and discussions weekly and, generally, read all papers even though his colleague graded them; his co-teacher did the same. Blank said, "I felt I worked as much - if not more - co-teaching this course than I would have had I been the sole instructor, and for only half pay."

Summation: Drs. Boyle and Blank entered into this co-teaching arrangement with some concerns about coordination, transitions, grading, and division of labor. Since this was a blended course, its very nature created a natural division of labor - Dr. Boyle would handle the on-line portion, while Dr. Blank would handle the face-to-face portion. Professor Boyle is geographically located in Florida, while Blank is located locally to UMUC in Maryland.

Lessons Learned:

1) When co-teaching, early communication among the instructors and the Program Director is important, but, it is most important between the instructors.

2) All of the "players" need to agree on who is doing **what**, **when,** and **how**.

3) Especially critical to these early decisions are the devices and methodology of coordination; e.g., daily or weekly communication by email or telephone, and the application of other technologies.

4) Each instructor in a blended course needs to maintain continuous involvement with the progress, material, and each student's performance in all parts of the course.

What Is the Course?

Individual efforts: The course, "Marketing Management and Innovation" is an amalgamation of individual and team efforts. In addition to the usual assigned readings in the text books and periodicals (available through UMUC's library database), the students have weekly on-line conference assignments. They are expected to post their own, individualized interpretation of the main topics in the readings, a personalized example as to how these main topics are applied within their own organizations and professions, and then read and comment on the postings of their peers. In addition, all students are expected to prepare an individual paper in which they generate ideas for new products or services that are innovative, complete a New Product Screening Matrix, select the best-rated product/service from the list, and comment on how their proposed product/service would progress through the New Product Development process.

Team efforts: Teams of 4-6 members are assigned at the beginning of the term. They are expected to begin organizing themselves immediately (since this course is number five in the students' experience,

and they generally remain within their cohort sections to this point, organizing for team work is very easy). They develop a Team Work Plan (TWP) for the completion of their team's marketing plan (a semester-long project). Although the TWP is not graded, a Faculty Assistant (FA - more on her and her role later) consults with each team as they build these plans, answers questions on the assignment, and ensures that each team basically conforms to its plans.

Semester-long project: Each team is assigned a semester-long team project to develop a marketing plan for an innovative product/service (selected from the individual team members' suggestions). Each week, teams are responsible for completing a corresponding section of their marketing plan. Although individual team members may be assigned certain management and editing tasks, all team members are collectively responsible for understanding and preparing materials for this assignment. In a blended section, the teams also make an oral presentation of their marketing plans. Therefore, Dr. Blank would observe and grade that portion, and both professors would read, grade, compare grades, and come to an agreement on the teams' marketing plans.

Case work: In the blended class, two in-class case discussions are assigned. Each student is responsible for participating and contributing to these discussions. Blank initially planned to have the 4-6 member teams conduct stand-up, oral presentations of the assigned case questions. The teams encountered so many procedural questions and concerns during their preparation for this activity that Blank revised the assignments to be a general class discussion of the cases. In addition, two student sub-teams are provided with two separate questions related to the case to be answered and submitted on-line. Individuals' grades for each case analysis are a combination of their participation in the class discussion and the analysis submitted by their sub-team. Since the case work is a combination in-class and conference assignment, Professor Blank would be the lead for grading both portions.

Who Are the Instructors and What Did They Bring to the Table?

At the time of their collaboration, both Drs. Boyle and Blank had had many years of teaching experience at several different colleges and universities. It was difficult for a Military Academy and a Naval Academy graduate to collaborate during the week preceding the Army-Navy football game, but they overcame this problem without causing any long-term damage to their relationship, or impacting the class and the students in any way. They had taught the Marketing course in UMUC's MBA program several times. Blank had also taught the MBA orientation course, plus other courses in the MBA program. In addition, they brought extensive experience from careers in the private sector. Finally, they were past-nominees for UMUC's Stanley Drazek Teaching Excellence Award.

Each instructor in UMUC's MBA program has a Faculty Assistant assigned to him or her. However, an FA may be assigned to two or more instructors, or have responsibility for two or more sections with the same instructor. In Drs. Boyle and Blank's blended section, Ms. Tara Camp was the FA. Fortunately, she had been the FA for both of them during previous terms. As mentioned above, Ms. Tara's primary responsibility was to work with each team on their TWPs. In addition, she was also a valuable resource to the students since she is a recent graduate of the program and has experienced problems and frustrations similar to what they have.

Summation: The two instructors and Faculty Assistant make up a formidable team to co-teach a blended course. But, more importantly, they bring the knowledge, skill, and ability to pull it off.

Syllabus and Setting-Up the Course

As mentioned previously, the syllabus for this course includes four in-class, face-to-face sessions spread over a ten-week term. Due to the need for similarity and continuity among the various sections of the marketing course, each of the approximately eighteen instructors teaching the course uses the same text book, assigned readings, and syllabus. However, there are some differences between the syllabi for the blended and the fully on-line versions of the course. For example:

- During the first scheduled week of the course, the blended sections meet face-to-face where they discuss the same material the on-line students discuss in the conferences. The blended section instructors also spend some time on introductions and orientation to the course. UMUC's MBA program utilizes student-cohorts; therefore, by the time students get to Blank and Boyle, they pretty-well know each other and are cognizant of their peers' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the teams have an opportunity to interface and start their organizing during this first session.
- The case work is scheduled during back-to-back weeks for the on-line sections while there is a one-week gap between the two cases for the blended sections (in order not to have blended sections meeting face-to-face during two consecutive weeks).
- Blended section teams make oral presentations (using PowerPoint slides) of their marketing plans during the last week of the term while the on-line sections submit written versions among with their slides.

Largely because of the number of sections of this course, the format and structure of the on-line WebTycho classroom is basically "fixed" for all instructors, including those teaching blended sections. UMUC uses a proprietary computerized classroom, WebTycho, for the on-line portions of their classes. WebTycho is similar to BlackBoard. However, each instructor has a limited degree of latitude, especially with some administrative aspects. Prior to this co-teaching experience, Boyle and Blank had exercised this latitude in their own separate ways. This caused them some small measure of consternation. For example, Blank was of the habit of placing several administrative information conferences in the same on-line area with the weekly conferences. Boyle, however, placed these in a separate area, labeled "Course Content." Certainly, this was not a major disagreement, but an example of a learning experience for the instructors.

Summation: It's universal that instructors will never be satisfied when they must use syllabi which are common to a course or a department. It's part of the "Not Invented Here" syndrome. Blank and Boyle had their problems and concerns with their syllabus, but fortunately, they worked with their Program Director, Dr. Anna Andriasova, to make adjustments to meet their needs. For example, they found the instructions for the first individual assignment (a paper) did not specifically require students to provide an explanation of how they arrived at a particular conclusion. As a result, most students didn't explain themselves, and it left a large hole in their assumptions. [Thanks, Anna.]

Lessons learned:

1) Syllabi must be complete and clear, but they should also be concise. Certain information (especially administrative information) should be packaged in some other location than in the syllabus.

2) Changes to a syllabus once a course starts should only be made in critical situations.

3) Whenever possible, in-class sessions should not be scheduled "back-to-back."

4) Co-teaching instructors must be willing to concede certain points to each other, and go with a compromise that makes the most sense for the students and their learning.

Division of Labor

Conferences: Since Professors Boyle and Blank knew from the syllabus that the conferences were on-line activities, they could best be handled by Dr. Boyle. For this activity, he:

- developed and incorporated overviews and summaries;
- followed the on-going discussion during the week; and
- graded and provided feedback on the conferences.

However, Dr. Blank also needed to follow the conferences in order to be aware of the students' understanding of the subject matter he needed to reinforce during the in-class sessions. He freely participated in the conferences, adding his comments and feedback to both the students' responses and Dr. Boyle's input. In addition, some part of each in-class session discussed the conference material. Therefore, it became incumbent on Dr. Blank to provide grading input back to Dr. Boyle. The conference activity accounts for 35% of each student's final grade for the course.

Interestingly, Dr. Boyle applied some of the tools provided by UMUC to manage the conferences. For example, he used PureVoice and WIMBA Voice Tools for some of the overviews and summaries and individual conference feedback. PureVoice is a readily available, free application whereby recorded audio feedback can be provided to each student individually. WIMBA Voice Tools and Live Classroom are suites of Internet tools that can be used synchronously or asynchronously to bring additional content and variety into the on-line classroom. Dr. Boyle had also planned to use the WIMBA classroom tool for a special follow-up session on a particularly difficult pricing exercise, but student performance on the exercise indicated they did not need additional tutoring.

Papers: There are two papers in the marketing course; an individual assignment paper and the team marketing plan. The innovative idea provided by one member of each team **(**in their individual assignment paper) becomes the basis for the team's product/service marketing plan. Since Dr. Blank observed the teams' oral presentations of their marketing plans, he graded both the individual innovative idea paper and the team marketing plans, which accounted for 10% and 25% respectively, of a student's final grade. However, since Professor Boyle had input into both of these grades, he had to read and comment on both papers.

At the outset, Drs. Boyle and Blank discussed the possibility of using Microsoft's Office Live Workspace (MOLW) to coordinate comments and grading of the papers. Microsoft Office Live Workspace is a Web-based program that helps colleagues collaborate - review and comment - on documents, notes, spreadsheets, presentations, and lists. However, they discovered that using email and Microsoft's Word were sufficient, and they didn't need to learn a new tool. This experience with MOLW pointed out the difficulty associated with learning to use a new "tool" either after a course begins and/or without adequate time.

Cases: Earlier, the Program Director and Professor Blank had decided the cases would be discussed during in-class, face-to-face sessions, and special questions would be assigned to small, two-person teams which would be submitted on-line. The casework portion of each student's grade was fully graded by one instructor – Dr. Blank. Casework accounted for 20% of the students' final grade.

Initially, Drs. Boyle and Blank saw good reason to use WIMBA Voice Tools to provide audio feedback and short whiteboard explanations to the small teams on their responses to the casework questions, but decided ultimately to only use a grading rubric in the interest of time, since the two cases were scheduled so close to each other.

Grading: UMUC's MBA program has a strong policy for the use of grading rubrics. Dr. Blank feels rubrics have effectively eliminated about 90% of students' "push back" and arguments over grading. He believes rubrics reduce the subjectivity in the grading process and also provide a vehicle for conveying feedback to students on their performance. Professors Blank and Boyle used rubrics extensively in teaching this course. In addition to the rubrics providing more definitive feedback to the students regarding their performance on assignments, Blank and Boyle found that the rubrics provided an effective and efficient vehicle for them to coordinate their individual inputs to a student's grade on a piece of their work.

Summation: There is no substitute for experience and planning. Professors Boyle and Blank applied their knowledge of the course material and familiarity with the individual parts to plan what and how they would divide the labor and conduct this course. Even so, they knew both of them would have to be involved in almost all of the activities - one could not "sit back" while the other managed and taught his

particular portion. Their early planning - well in advance of the term beginning - helped to make co-teaching feasible and workable.

Lessons learned:

1) Become familiar with the course - the syllabus, text, readings, assignments, etc. - before planning.

2) Plan and decide on who is to do what, when, and how.

3) Consider using any available technology to facilitate your work and collaboration., but be realistic in the use of tools. If you aren't familiar with a tool, it's difficult to learn it and use it effectively once you've started a course. Do your practice before the course starts.

4) Use rubrics to facilitate the grading of student assignments. They make the job a bit easier.

Coordination

Staying on-top of what's going on, and why: Fortunately, our two professors live in an Internet world! The course they taught is driven through an Internet-based classroom system, WebTycho. A unique component to this experiment was the blending of four face-to-face sessions with on-line teaching, and the utilization of various technological tools to facilitate their co-teaching. Although they could have divided the labor between themselves and managed their individual portions of the course, they felt this was not in the best interests of themselves or the students, so they had to collaborate. Interaction between the instructors and the Program Director never impinged on their activity. However, they faced a continuing challenge of coordination. Drs. Boyle and Blank recognized from the beginning that coordination would make the difference between success and mediocrity.

Professor Blank had improvised a "tool" in the preceding term which he felt had worked well for him. From the syllabus, he developed a daily and weekly to-do list of tasks he either had to or wanted to do to stay on top of the course. Generally speaking, most faculty would probably not need such a tool, but 1) he's a bit O.C.D. about organization, and 2) he occasionally forgets important tasks. He also built this tool for the co-taught course, and then divided it into the tasks he saw for himself and the tasks he saw for Professor Boyle. Although Blank offered this additional coordination tool, it's not known whether or not Dr. Boyle felt a need for it or used it.

During the planning for the course, the two instructors spoke frequently by telephone, and exchanged emails with regularity. Both Blank and Boyle utilized Skype and Professor Boyle has VoIP service. Skype is another readily available, free application whereby two people or a small conference can conduct audio and video communications. Voice-over-Internet protocol (VoIP) is a procedure optimized for the transmission of voice through the Internet or other packet-switched networks. These two applications effectively eliminated the cost of long distance calls. It was during the planning phase they agreed to the division of labor, the usage of technology, and the frequency with which they would interface during the term.

During their planning, Drs. Boyle and Blank planned to communicate weekly on Mondays. Although the day-of-the-week is immaterial, as the course progressed they found their Mondays were too full with other activities. Therefore, they talked and planned their activities weekly on an "as needed" basis. During these conversations, they shared notes on their observations and experiences from the previous week; especially related to any assignments graded during that week. Additionally, they discussed their individual plans for interactions with the class during the coming week. Dr. Blank discussed his plans for the face-to-face session for that week, and sought Dr. Boyle's concurrence and suggestions. It was also during these conversations that they discussed problems with individual students and their plans for dealing with them.

Drs. Boyle and Blank obviously depended heavily on email for coordination of the course and their individual portions. This contributed to a couple of problems that required solving early-on:

- Although both instructors maintained primary and secondary email accounts, Boyle and Blank quickly adopted a primary account for email between them.
- Once during the term, Dr. Blank's primary email provider crashed. He informed Dr. Boyle and the students to resort to the secondary account for the duration.

Summation: Coordination between the instructors in a co-taught course can be challenging - regardless of whether it's an on-line, face-to-face, or blended course. In theory, one of the greatest of these challenges could be the geographic distance between them. With Dr. Boyle located in Tampa and Dr. Blank in Maryland, this distance could have been a factor. Blank knew, however, from his prior co-teaching experience (his partner was located in the frozen north of Alberta, Canada), that those challenges could be substantially mitigated when the instructors know and respect each other, consider each other's work loads, and plan ahead.

Lessons learned:

1) Become familiar with the electronic classroom system your organization uses. Learn it, practice, and play around with it.

2) Of course, know the syllabus and the material (oops, this was said before).

3) Learn and use the available technology during your planning.

4) Plan ahead; especially what, who, how, and when various tasks will be done.

5) Communicate frequently to share observations, feedback, and current plans.

Tools - WebTycho, WIMBA, PureVoice, Computer & Projector, and Skype

Distance learning at UMUC is facilitated by an electronic classroom system called "WebTycho" (W/T). W/T permits the instructor to post a) the class syllabus at the beginning of the course, b) frequent announcements (either administrative in nature or instructional), c) narrative or recorded lecturettes and feedback, and d) students' grades on individual and team assignments. Students may post a) questions to faculty, b) responses to assigned questions, c) comments on their peers' responses, and d) their completed papers and projects. In addition, W/T provides a "work space" for teams - a place for them to hold on-line "meetings," and post their individual contributions toward team projects. Dr. Jay Alden, a colleague of Boyle and Blank, introduced and tested the use of Wikis in place of WebTycho for the students to collaboratively develop their market plans. He reported success with this test, saying that Wikis made it "…easy for him to identify the extent of contribution by each team member…." (*Wiki Survey,* Fall, 2008). Drs. Boyle and Blank, of course, fully utilized W/T, as will be seen later in this article.

Although W/T has a chat capability, Professors Blank and Boyle considered using what they considered a more user-friendly two-way, electronic tool - WIMBA. WIMBA's capabilities offered them the opportunity for class discussions with an electronic whiteboard available. The professors expected to use WIMBA when a more difficult concept or problem arose when an in-class session was not immediately scheduled. Initially, they anticipated Dr. Boyle would conduct a WIMBA session with the section to discuss a particularly difficult pricing exercise. He would use the whiteboard capability to demonstrate methodology in a kind of tutorial. UMUC's policy precludes making synchronous on-line class meetings or chats mandatory, so Dr. Boyle or Blank would be obliged to record any such session so students who could not participate synchronously could access it later at their convenience. Fortunately, the students did not encounter any difficulty with this concept, so this WIMBA session became unnecessary.

They also considered, for future reference, the possibility of pre-recording a few WIMBA tutorial sessions for student instruction and remediation on an "as needed" basis. In addition, they considered the future possibility of the FA using WIMBA to conduct feedback sessions with the teams on Team Work Plans and the progress on their Market Plans.

To repeat, Professor Boyle used a free program, PureVoice, for one-way, recorded audio comments and feedback to the students on their weekly on-line conference responses and comments. He had extensive, successful experience with using PureVoice in his prior classes. PureVoice is widely available and very easy to use.

For the in-class sessions, UMUC provided an extremely modern, comfortable seminar-style classroom with a "smart podium," large screen, and electronic projector. The "smart podium" has a permanent-mounted computer with the necessary controls to project any sort of documentation or visuals on CD or flash drive, DVD, or video tape. In addition, through the podium, an instructor has the capabilities to connect his/her classroom with any other classroom in the center and/or other UMUC facilities at other locations. This connectivity, however, is limited to within the UMUC system. At each student's desk location, electricity for a laptop computer was available, while Wi-Fi was available throughout the building.

Early-on, Professors Blank and Boyle felt it was important for the students to understand both instructors were involved in all aspects of the class. They especially decided they wanted both to have a classroom presence during the first and last in-class sessions. In addition, they decided to fulfill their program's technology objective and their own goal to add multimedia and variety whenever possible and feasible. Since the budget precluded Dr. Boyle flying-in from Florida for these sessions, they sought a viable alternative. After conversing with UMUC's Center for Support of Instruction in the Office of Instructional Services and Support, they determined a feasible approach would be a two-way audio and video connection between the classroom and Dr. Boyle using the "freebie" service Skype, an "eyeball" camera, and a headset mike. This required some testing and debugging. During the testing, this worked reasonably well. Unfortunately, on the evening of the first class session, Dr. Boyle became an "audio-only" member of the class. Later, the problem was defined as Dr. Blank's "operator error."

There were limitations to this arrangement. Dr. Blank had to repeat into the microphone any questions or comments in order for Dr. Boyle to hear. When it was appropriate for Dr. Boyle to view individual students it was necessary for the students to come forward to the "smart podium." This was awkward and distracting, at best. Drs. Boyle and Blank believe they should have used a better, more professional-grade video camera and a higher quality microphone in the classroom. The arrangement of an "eyeball" camera and a headset mike only served the purpose at minimal cost. Further, Dr. Boyle was unable to read any projected slides; therefore, any slides had to be emailed to him in advance. For all these reasons, they opted to abort their plans to use this arrangement for the last in-class session when the teams made their oral presentations of their marketing plans. Instead, only Dr. Blank observed the final session. Afterward, he and Dr. Boyle conferred by phone on grading the teams' presentations.

Summation: Technology and physical equipment played a large part in these professors' success with this course. In addition, their varied usage of the equipment provided variety and increased motivation for student participation. HOWEVER, further application of available technology and the introduction of additional technology hold the promise of increasing the efficacy of blended courses.

Lessons learned:

1) Use all of the technology and equipment you have available, and consider adding technological applications if they serve you and help the students to learn.

2) If you can, within budgetary constraints, utilize professional-grade equipment. If there is a "cheap" approach possible, consider if there are concessions that detract from the learning.

3) HOWEVER, be familiar with all of it before you attempt to use it as in the old adage about how to get to Carnegie Hall, "Practice, practice, practice."

Managing and Conducting the Course

Note: Rather than providing a "journal" of the progress of the course, Professors Blank and Boyle condensed their experiences to a synopsis, culminating in a summary and more lessons learned.

1) Before classes begin, the instructors posted a "welcoming" message in the on-line classroom wherein the instructors introduced themselves and provided contact information, start dates, and how to obtain course materials.

2) When the syllabus and course schedule became available to the students, they encouraged the students to read the syllabus and familiarize themselves with the on-line classroom and the instructions therein.

3) Drs. Blank and Boyle emailed the students a weekly "to-do" list each Monday. These to-do lists reiterated the assignments for the week, and reminded the students of impending future assignments and upcoming in-class sessions. Although they felt these to-do lists were unnecessary "hand-holding" for graduate-level students, they found the discussions were better, the numbers of lateness and incompletes were less, and procedural questions were fewer.

4) Prior to the first in-class session – Dr. Blank notified the students as to which team they were assigned to for the market plan project.

5) During each in-class session, Blank projected a prepared PowerPoint agenda - "old business," "new business," and the assignment for the evening. During the first in-class session, Drs. Boyle (via the aforementioned audio connection) and Blank answered questions on the syllabus, the assignments, and grading. In addition, they conducted an "expectations" discussion - their expectations of the students and the students' expectations for themselves, the course, and the instructors.

6) Throughout the course, the students were required to participate in on-line conferences on the readings assigned and specific personal applications of the information in these readings to their business or profession. Dr. Boyle provided extensive and on-going PureVoice feedback each week. Further, he graded the students' conference performance twice during the term. Dr. Blank also followed the on-line conferences each week and freely participated with his own comments and feedback. However, both he and Dr. Boyle had to be careful not to provide conflicting or confounding "messages" to the students.

7) Each student submitted an individual new product/service paper. Professor Boyle had an opportunity to read and comment on these papers, providing input to Professor Blank before he graded them. WebTycho has a "portfolio" feature which permitted the instructor to return a student's marked-up papers with the grading rubric attached.

8) Each team selected a product/service on which to prepare a marketing plan. The teams were asked to complete portions of their marketing plans each week. Ms. Camp reviewed these new additions weekly and provided feedback and consulting to each team. Both Drs. Blank and Boyle also read, evaluated, and commented on these sections frequently.

9) Professor Blank led very active in-class discussions of the two Harvard Business School cases based on assigned case-based questions. In addition, small sub-teams addressed separate case-based questions on-line. Blank graded both the in-class and small-team portions using a rubric.

10) In the final face-to-face session, each team made its oral presentation of their marketing plans. They were required to use PowerPoint slides which they had prepared on flash drives. Following each of their presentations, their peers had the opportunity to ask questions about their product/service and/or their marketing plans. Additionally, teams were required to submit their marketing plans for grading before the close of the term. Blank first graded the oral presentations, including the slides and "stand-up" performances, and then the marketing plans, using a specific rubric. He provided this input to Dr. Boyle for his consideration.

Summation: The possibility always exists in a co-teaching situation that the students are never certain who the instructor is during a particular portion of the course. In addition, they could have concerns about differing standards and expectations between the two co-teachers. Although Drs. Boyle and Blank cannot be certain, they believe such confusion did not surface in this class. Having and using technology in this situation greatly facilitated coordination and both instructors' abilities to be "involved" in all aspects of the course.

Lessons learned:

1) Explore and use whatever technology is available to you. (Again, we said this before. Oops.)

2) Even though one instructor agrees to handle a portion of a co-taught class, the other instructor needs to be actively involved. It's good to have a contingency plan in case one instructor becomes ill, has to travel, or simply fails to complete a task. Fortunately, Drs. Boyle and Blank did not experience any of these dilemmas.

3) Both instructors need to agree on a student's grades on major projects.

4) Feedback on grades needs to be frequent and thorough. Rubrics are a vehicle for removing some grading subjectivity and providing feedback to the students at the same time.

5) Instructors need to maintain continuous communication between them, especially to share what material they covered, what information they told students, and the grades and feedback they provided.

6) Instructors need to encourage students to be familiar with the syllabus and any additional class instructions. Additionally, they need to motivationally reinforce students who ask questions, participate in discussions, and push-back when they have specific concerns.

Conclusion

Although this course went quite smoothly, that is not to say there were no problems between Professors Boyle and Blank. Transitions between in-class and on-line sessions required frequent communication between the two professors. They needed to share "what" occurred during each other's session, and "how it went." This was easier on Drs. Boyle and Blank than it was on their wives who had to deal with the constant telephone calls and Skype conversations, since the two professors both work from their homes.

Professors Blank and Boyle (by now, this is starting to sound like an old vaudeville act) feel they proved that a blended course can be successfully co-taught by two instructors when one of them is locally "on-the-ground" with the in-class sessions and the other is located some distance away and handling largely the on-line sessions. More importantly, they developed some "lessons learned" which should help others who embark on this same type of journey.

References

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