Excellence in Online Teaching: How do we define it and how do we get there?

Rena M Palloff, PhD
Capella University
Program and Faculty Lead, Doctorate in Social Work
As of Fall 2011, online learning reached 32% of total higher education enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

Per the 2014 Learning House report, 45% of students report taking an online course and 17% graduated from an online program.

47% of respondents in the Learning House report felt that online learning was better than classroom-based learning and 43% felt it was about the same in quality (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2014)

However, a 2012 survey of faculty (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jascik, 2012) indicates that instructors fear and avoid online learning due to concerns about quality.

Are these concerns valid? How do we create quality online experiences?
Assessing instructor readiness to teach online:

- Willingness to learn
- Willingness to surrender some control over course design and customary teaching style
- Ability to collaborate with peers
- Willingness to move away from traditional instruction
- Ability to build a support system
- Patience with technology
- Ability and willingness to learn from others outside the university and within (including students!)

Are all instructors qualified to teach online?
* Clear instruction about course expectations and assignments
* A high degree of instructor interaction
* A reasonable load in terms of reading and assignments
* Reassurance that their ideas are on track
* Prompt feedback
* Tech support

* INTERACTION!!

* What online learners want!
* Use only the technology that meets learning objectives
* Include a variety of assignments to keep things interesting and address various learning styles
* Incorporate multimedia approaches (audio, video, synchronous virtual classroom sessions, mobile technology, )
* Stimulate interaction through the use of good questions and by modeling good communication
* BUILD COMMUNITY!

* What excellent online instructors know how to do
A Phased Approach to Faculty Development
Where do you place yourself?

* Visitor
* Novice
* Apprentice
* Insider
* Master

* Where do you see yourself?
* Personal
* Pedagogical
* Content
* Technical

* What are YOUR greatest training needs?
* Encourage self-assessment to help instructors determine where they are and what they need
* Match training to experience level
* Create a support network
* Design a mentorship program
* Provide lots of support and feedback
* Let them make mistakes, but...
* SHOWCASE EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION!

* Training for excellence
* No cookie-cutter approaches!
* Don’t assume that those who have been teaching face-to-face will know what to do online with little guidance
* Align faculty training with the institutional culture and the way student courses are and should be taught
* Honor experience!
* Use adult-oriented, constructivist approaches
* Use best practices in online teaching to train online instructors

* Tips for Effective Faculty Orientation
* Good faculty training for online teaching should include:
  • Face-to-face and online sessions
  • Ability to work as a learner and an instructor
  • Customization to instructor and institutional needs (Remember those phases?)
  • Consideration of past online experience

* Effective Faculty Development
Most used approaches to faculty training for online teaching:

- Face-to-face sessions
- Online
- A combination thereof (sometimes using a flipped approach)
- Ability to work as a learner and an instructor
- One-to-one coaching
- Mentoring
- Certification

* Effective Faculty Development
* Adjuncts are often practitioners first and instructors second - may lack pedagogical skill
* Some teach for multiple institutions - assessment of pedagogical skill plus orientation to the institution should be the focus
* Training for online teaching should be mandatory
* Involve them in faculty communities of practice and invite them to participate in training, either in person or online

* Working with adjuncts at a distance
Self-Development: Creating a Developmental Network
Faculty Development

- Faculty community
- Focus on excellence
- Focus on ongoing training
- Inclusive planning process
- Support
- Student satisfaction and performance

Self-Development

Institutional Support

* A Model System for Faculty Development