IMPLEMENTING DISTANCE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION A PANEL DISCUSSION FOR ABSEL LAS VEGAS, 2004

Dan Baugher
Pace University
Dbaugher@Pace.edu

Richard J. Butler
SUNY Empire State College
dick.butler@esc.edu

Sandra Morgan
University of Hartford
morgan@mail.hartford.edu

Andrew Varanelli, Jr.
Pace University
Avaranelli@Pace.edu

ABSTRACT

Panelists lead discussion of implementation issues in distance education. Distance education is broadly conceived to include modes that result in infrequent face to face meetings with faculty. The panel begins with a discussion of an on-line, project based, MBA program. Implementation problems associated with Internet resources are discussed. Compared with classroom courses, on-line courses may require different behavioral cues. One panelist reports his study of cues for predicting on-line student performance. Organizational and faculty responses to distance education change the role of faculty, with accompanying workload and quality issues. Audience is invited to participate, with observations on changes in their circumstances when implementing distance and other non-traditional education modes.

THE PANELISTS

The four panelists are experienced in different aspects of implementing distance and non-traditional education. Two presenters (Varanelli and Baugher) bring considerable experience in the implementation of new distance education programs and the use of courseware to support distance education.

Panelist Andrew Varanelli is the Director of Information Systems and Technology for the Business School at PACE, where he has supervised the development of a Web-based MBA program. This MBA program is project-based, non-traditional, and completely dependent on Web resources.

Panelist Dan Baugher is the Chair of the Management and Management Science Department at a large urban university, PACE University, where distance education is an ongoing effort, especially with regard to the integration of Web activities into traditional classes. Both Panelist Baugher and Varanelli will discuss course delivery, student monitoring and faculty development in the use of distance education for these different programs.

The other two panelists (Butler and Morgan) are experienced in working with nontraditional students in different modes. Dick Butler works often in a "guided independent study" learning mode that provides students only limited contact with faculty, and requires integration of student service and academic responsibilities by the faculty member.

Sandy Morgan has substantial experience in a program serving adult learners at Charter Oaks and University of Hartford. Unlike traditional education, which tends to compartmentalize the role of educator and student service into different departments or jobs, distance education may require the integration of some aspects of these roles. These two panelists will address alternative faculty roles in distance education.

OVERVIEW STATEMENT
IMPLEMENTING DISTANCE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

Since its founding in 1974, ABSEL has been in the forefront of implanting innovations in higher education. Thus, it is particularly appropriate for this panel to lead a discussion with attendees at the 2004 ABSEL conference, thirty years after ABSEL's founding, to consider the issue of how new approaches impact education.

In recent years many faculty members and their institutions have either embraced, or been thrust into new modes of delivering education. A very rapidly growing mode is distance education The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that 44 percent of two- and four-year higher education institutions offered a total 52,230 distance education courses in 1997-98. This compared with 33 percent of institutions offering a total of 25,730 such courses in 1994-95 (Mathie, 2000). Classes that depend totally on the Internet for course delivery, or on its use for course support in classroom based courses are on the rise, a trend expected to continue.   And there has been a change in the modal student.   The "National Center for Educational Statistics" web site indicates that, in some respect, 77% of undergraduates are non-traditional.

While many are exhilarated, even empowered, by these changes, assumptions and approaches that worked well for classroom-based instruction, and traditional students, often don't serve as well for distance learning and nontraditional students. This occurs at several different units and levels of analysis within our universities: college structures and processes; courses; individual learners; and individual faculty members.

As much of the change is fueled by technology, it also draws us into debates regarding the impact of technology on learning.   Clark (1983) concluded that technologies "do not influence learning under any circumstance" (p. 445).   Clark (1983, 1994) argues that technology impacts only the cost or extent of instructional delivery, and that it is the quality of instruction itself that impacts learning.   On the other hand, Kozma (1991) argues that the characteristics and capabilities of a particular technology interact with learners with some technologies benefiting some learners more than others.

Reality probably lies somewhere in between these extreme views.   The Internet as a technology is most certainly capable of reducing costs and delivering courses to more students, as Clark would suggest.   Yet, it is also clear that educational technology can, nay must, be matched to students and course topics for better learning, as Kozma would contend.   In fact, this view is critical as we move into the era of distance education -- lest we assume that previous methods for offering courses, assigning faculty, and monitoring students can be transferred to this new environment with little or no change.

This panel focuses on a number of issues in the organization and implementation of distance education.   The four presentations discuss: 1) project-based distance education, 2) web cues for uncovering potentially poor performers in traditional classes including Web activities, 3) changes in faculty roles that may accompany/be necessary, and 4) soliciting the insights and experiences of ABSEL members and making sense of this.   Participants should leave the session better understanding how other innovating organizations are coping with these challenges. They may also find that assumptions and approaches for classroom based instruction may not serve distance education very well.

PANELIST 1:
BUILDING AN MBA PROGRAM THAT IS PROJECT FOCUSED AND NOT COURSE FOCUSED: THE PACE EXPERIENCE

Andrew Varanelli, Jr.
Pace University

This presentation describes an alternative approach to creating an MBA-program supported by the Internet, known as e.MBA@PACE (Pace University, 2003). This online MBA is one response to marketplace demands. (Hitt, 1998). Hitt notes increased emphasis will be placed on distance education as a result of asynchronous technology, and its ability to provide global delivery. The Internet and collaborative courseware are technologies providing the vehicle to meet these demands. The Lubin School developed e.MBA@PACE, a program that uses the Internet and courseware to deliver the MBA program to corporate managers who want to study for the MBA, at the same time they continue work (Hall and Varanelli, 2003). The e.MBA is registering its fifth class; Dec. 2003 the third class graduates.

In the MBA marketplace, asynchronous Web-based programs can vary in format.   The range is from standard course-based MBAs, offered to a broad range of student and delivered completely on-line; to highly selective, project-based MBAs which offer no courses and involve short-term residencies throughout the world.   In developing the e.MBA@PACE program, a project-based, problem-centered learning approach was selected. Problem-centered learning is widely used in medicine (Ablanese and Mitchell, 1993) and has been found to lead to better content retention (Barrows, 1985). The program was designed in 1999 and implemented in 2000. It emphasizes a collaborative learning model (Slavin, 1990), requiring students to work together in virtual teams throughout the 24-month program.   Students rotate to different teams, though the cohort of students (and instructors) remains the same. Face-to-face classroom interactions occur in nine residency periods (@ 3 days) distributed throughout the program. Projects used in the program are interdisciplinary. Designed to deliver the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for an MBA, projects focus on such key issues as competitive strategy, cost accounting, and similar MBA topics.   Projects employ student teams, working in a virtual environment.   The virtual environment is built using Blackboard courseware (Blackboard, 2003), which provides discussion boards, document uploads and downloads, and a variety of operational features.

PANELIST 2:
THE VALUE OF WEB SITE ACCESS FOR PREDICTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN WEB-SUPPORTED COURSES

Dan Baugher
Pace University

This presentation reports the findings from a study aimed at assessing the value of cues in identifying "at risk" students in web-based courses. In traditional classroom settings, faculty can attend to behavioral cues, such as student attendance and classroom participation. When a course moves on-line, these traditional cues are no longer present, especially when a class is taught completely on-line. One powerful feature of courseware is its ability to monitor on-line course activity of students (Shute & Regian, 1993; Svanum, Chen, & Bublitz, 1997). This feature may serve to provide useful predictor(s) of student performance. Wang and Newlin (2000) investigated the relationship to grades, of total homepage hits after the first week of a semester, and at the end of the semester. They found frequency of hits at both points in time related to course grades, for a course taught completely on-line. It is possible that such on-line activity may also be an indicator of success in a course that is only supported by Web activities, since such activity may indicate interest, involvement, and motivation in both types of Web-based courses. This presentation will discuss the findings of a study of 108 students' internet activity as a correlate of course performance. Consideration is given to practical and conceptual aspects of the measure, and findings of its correlation with performance in the course are reported. In this study, the pattern of activity (bunched versus distributed) proved more predictive than the raw frequency counts.

As faculty move increasing numbers of courses online, and/or supplement classroom courses with courseware, understanding the validity and reliability of cues that may be substituted for behavior monitoring methods of the classroom becomes increasingly important. This presentation reports on one empirical study, and discusses issues related to use of such cues.

PANELIST 3:
IS A CHANGED ROLE FOR FACULTY A CORRELATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION?

Richard J. Butler
SUNY Empire State College

This presentation highlights changing faculty role(s) and quality issues in distance education. Drucker (1968) characterized this age as "the age of discontinuity". Higher Education has to modify structure and processes, including faculty roles, in the interest of meeting emerging needs. Rudolph (1977) documented much "messiness", as forces emerged, from 1636 onward, that reshaped American higher education. Colleges find revolutionary transitions neither smooth nor easy. When colleges fail to teach what is needed, there are repercussions. Many transitions become clear only years after they take place. As well as incorporating changed curriculum and new methods, colleges may respond with changes in organization. Management literature has been replete with calls for organizations to change how they organize. Examples of such proposals include: use methods of science to determine the best way (Taylor, 1911), incorporate human behavior concepts (e.g., decision making) into organizational designs (Simon, 1949, and others); minimize information costs (Galbraith, 1973); increase reliance on teams rather than individual initiative (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993); organize around processes, rather than functions (Hammer and Champy, 1993). The following list of other responses is illustrative rather than complete. Other college and departmental responses include: ignoring change; installing hardware; supporting training opportunities; and changing recruitment and promotional standards. Faculty respond to change in a variety of ways: retirement; ignoring the changes; retraining; redesigning work methods and curricula to accommodate (new tools, methods, and processes). Re-thinking faculty role(s) may be important. Boyer's (1990) call for redefining scholarship is a constructive beginning. There are questions of ensuring quality. Demming's work (1986), suggests emphases that may already be used in many colleges. Defining quality from the customer's point of view, attending to output, focusing on system processes rather than inspecting individual parts or blaming individuals for failures, and selection of good materials (faculty, students, administrators, staff) offer ideas for quality in an era of distance education.

PANELIST 4:
SHARING OTHER ABSEL MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE AND SUMMING UP

Sandra Morgan
University of Hartford

In sum, the four presenters have a wealth of experience in several aspects of conceptualizing and implementing distance and non-traditional education. . The Internet is not going away, nor is distance education, nor are nontraditional learners. An audience attracted to this panel should prove a rich resource for exchange of problems, opportunities, and methodologies that are evolving at several different units and levels of analysis: college structures and process, courses, individual learners, and individual faculty members. The topics are timely as we increasingly move down the path of distance and non-traditional forms of education, whether we are completely reluctant or whether we are embracing this new technology. As educators we need to determine how to best respond to these discontinuities, and how best to make use of our new resources, including internet, courseware, and nontraditional learner.

REFERENCES
IMPLEMENTING DISTANCE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

Ablanese, M. A., & Mitchell, S. (1993). "Problem-based Learning: A Review of Literature on Its Outcomes and Implementation Issues." *Academic Medicine*, 68, 52-81.

Barrows, H. S. (1985). *How to Design a Problem-based Curriculum for the Preclinical Years.* New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Baugher, D., Varanelli, A, & Weisbord (2003), "Student Hits in an Internet-Supported Course: How Can

Instructors Use Them and What Do They Mean*?*" *Decision Science Journal of Innovative Education*, 2,2.

Blackboard, Inc. (2003). *Blackboard, V 6.*0, Washington, D.C., Blackboard, Inc.

Boyer, Ernest L. (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. San Francisco, Ca.: Jossey-Bass.

Demming, Edward (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Center for Advanced Engineering Study.

Drucker, Peter F. (1968). *The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society*. New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row Publishers.

Galbraith, Jay. (1973). *Designing Complex Organizations*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley

Hall, J., & Varanelli, A., "A Problem-Centered Hybrid EMBA for Leaders: Online and in Residence" *Proceedings of the 2003 EMBA Council*, Atlanta ,GA October, 2003.

Hammer, Michael & Champy, James (1993). *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*. New York, N.Y.: Harper Business Publications.

Hitt, Michael A. (1998). "Twenty-First Century Organizations: Business Firms, Business Schools, and the Academy. *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 218-224.

Katzenbach, Jon R. and Dougalas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Mathie, Virginia Andreoli (2000). "From Blackboard to Multimedia Classroom." *Monitor on Psychology*, 31(4), 57.

Pace University, (2003). *e.MBA@PACE*, *www.pace.edu/lubin/e.mba*

Rudolph, Frederick (1977). *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*. San Francisco, Ca.: Jossey Bass Classics.

Shute, V.J. & Regian, J. W. (1993). "Principles for Evaluating Intelligent Tutoring Systems." *Journal of Artificial Intelligence*, 4, 245-271.

Simon, H. J.(1949) *Administrative Behavior*, New York: The Macmillan Company

Svanum, S., Chen, S. H. A. & Bublitz, S. (1997). "Internet-Based Instruction of the Principles of Base-rate and Prediction: Demonstration Project." *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 29, 228-231.

Taylor, F. W., *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York: Harper, 1911.

Varanelli, A., & Baugher, D. (1999). "An Overview of Several Internet-Based MBA Programs." *Proceedings of the 7th Annual Meeting of ASBBS*, Las Vegas, NV.

Wang, A. Y., & Newlin, M. H. (2000). "Characteristics of Students Who Enroll and Succeed in Psychology Web-Based Classes." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 137-143.