



# THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

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## MARTIN

### THE DIGITAL NATIVES ARE RESTLESS:

### INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

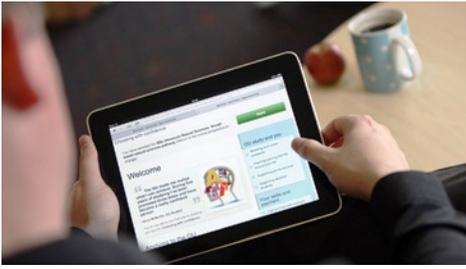
For over twenty years, personal technology has been available for faculty and students to use in the classroom; why then are textbooks and lectures still the most predominant means of instruction in most colleges and universities? According to Dean and Levine, passive learning still holds sway in most college courses<sup>1</sup>. Faculty in higher education have long been touted as experts in their given fields, and the use of technology in teaching and learning has often been at the discretion of the instructor.

Traditionally, classrooms have been considered the domain of the teacher—even K-12 classrooms. The standardization of content and assessments across states and even nationally has turned eyes toward K-12 public education, and technology integration has been included in that focus. Higher education institutions have long avoided that laser focus; although, in recent years, the accreditation process has begun to shine a light into those halls. While recognizing that most professors bring a wealth of knowledge to the classroom, there is a competing press between research and teaching<sup>2</sup>. Students prefer more engaging means of instruction than the traditional lecture model provides. Even faculty who are comfortable with technology and the online classroom continue to use outdated videos, years-old presentations, and pedagogy appropriate for the traditional classroom.

One of the issues may be there is low digital fluency among faculty. Many higher education faculty spend their educational years focused on discipline-specific content and research in pursuit of an advanced degree; often educational technology and pedagogy are not included. In addition, many universities have faculty that have been on campus for decades—these faculty may be digital immigrants and reluctant to embrace new teaching strategies.

Another issue may be complacency; instructors who began using technology in teaching years ago may identify as tech-savvy regarding the university's learning systems. These faculty often feel that their use of technology is adequate, and are unwilling to acknowledge that best practices in instructional pedagogy evolve as technology and research advance. However, most students (78%) think undergraduate education could improve with greater use of technology<sup>3</sup>.

Possibly because of these issues, many faculty members do not believe that distance or blended learning and online education can deliver outcomes equivalent to traditional instruction. Often, online classes are dismissed as a way to increase class size or cut budgets.



Colleges and universities today face greater challenges than in years past. Increases in tuition costs coupled with a deficit of high-paying, after-college jobs suggest to some that college may not be worth the investment. Additionally, schools are under increasing scrutiny from multiple stakeholders to provide evidence that students are achieving set outcomes. With these challenges, it is more important than ever that our colleges and universities embrace technology in teaching and learning, and recognize that teaching today's students necessitates a pedagogical shift to the teaching mindset.

This session will pose questions about the changing higher education landscape for faculty and students as well as explore ways to energize existing teaching and learning by infusing best practices in technology integration. Questions to be addressed include:

1. How do college students today differ from students a generation ago? How are they similar?
2. How do those differences and similarities impact learning at the higher ed level?
3. Should those differences impact teaching at the higher educational level?
4. How can we better prepare students for success in higher ed?
5. What types of professional development and training do you provide for faculty? How successful is it? What challenges do you see at your local institution?
6. In any change system, there are early adopters and laggards. What strategies do you use to encourage technology integration and pedagogical shift?
7. In some cases, early adopters of a system or process can become complacent a few years after implementation. How can we reenergize faculty to embrace new changes?

The University of Tennessee at Martin recently adopted a new learning management system; the move from Blackboard™ to Canvas™ provided opportunities to address these and other questions. For more information, please contact the UTM Instructional Technology Center or UTM Online:

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<sup>1</sup> Dean, D. R., & Levine, A. (2013, October 9). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, and the Analog Campus. HigherEd.Com. Retrieved October 23, 2017, from <https://www.higheredjobs.com/blog/postDisplay.cfm?post=462> .

<sup>2</sup> Parr, C. (2014, February 21). 6 challenges impeding technology adoption in higher education in 2014. Higher Education Times. Retrieved October 23, 2017, from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/6-challenges-impeding-technology-adoption-in-higher-education-in-2014/2011501.article> .

<sup>3</sup> Dean, D. R., & Levine, A. (2013, October 9). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, and the Analog Campus. HigherEd.Com. Retrieved October 23, 2017, from <https://www.higheredjobs.com/blog/postDisplay.cfm?post=462> .