STUDENT REACTIONS TO COVID-19 REMOTE LEARNING: LESSONS LEARNED FROM MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS

OLC ACCELERATE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 9, 2020

SESSION CHAIR: SUZANNE ENSMANN, UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

PANELISTS:
AIMEE WHITESIDE, UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA
AMY GARRETT DIKKERS, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON
SHERI CONKLIN, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS:
LINA GOMEZ-VASQUEZ, UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA
RONDA STURGILL, UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA
SESSION PLAN

Quick introductions by panelists

Questions for the panelists

• Address the situation, your campus size, and the campus study
• Was prior experience and training a factor for students? What played a key role in their transition?
• What were students’ takeaways from this experience?
• What should instructors and academic leaders take away and change moving forward, based on student feedback?

Questions and answers
QUICK INTROS

Briefly tell us…

• About your background (title, years teaching/professional development)

• Years teaching or supporting various forms of online, blended, and hyflex/blendflex learning

• Areas of specialization

• Highlight recent books/articles
ADDRESS THE SITUATION, YOUR CAMPUS SIZE/DEMOGRAPHICS, AND THE CAMPUS STUDY?
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA: CAMPUS

• Mid-sized, private four-year residential university in Tampa, Florida adjacent to downtown Tampa

• 9,605 students enroll in Fall 2020

• Students from 50 states and 130 countries, 50% from Florida

• 1,200 international students

• Four colleges, small class sizes

• Very limited blended/online learning options
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA: COVID SITUATION

Situation
• Switch to emergency remote learning happened while students were on Spring Break in early March
• Student were asked to resume classes on Zoom the following Monday

Challenges
• Many were traveling. Most did not have their books, and they had to move out of the dorms
• Some couldn’t get back to their home countries
• Faculty were asked to get courses ready for second half of the term and to communicate to students ASAP
• We had two business days and the weekend to get ready
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA: COVID SITUATION

Survey
• 41 questions, 7 demographic questions sent to all students through a global campus email by the Dean of Students on May 7, 2020
• Follow up email was sent on May 13
• 711 students participated from a total of approximately 9600 (7% response rate)
• Topics: health and wellness, technology use, overall experience

Focus Group
• Conducted session in July 2020
## UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA: DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>68% White, non-Hispanic</th>
<th>11% Hispanic/Latino</th>
<th>7% Black or African American, Non-Hispanic</th>
<th>4% Asian, non-Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>69% Female</td>
<td>23% Male</td>
<td>1% Non-binary or Transgender Male</td>
<td>1% Prefer not to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>51% 17-20 years old</td>
<td>32% 21-25 years old</td>
<td>5% 26-30 years old</td>
<td>5% &gt; 30 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>23% Freshmen</td>
<td>16% Sophomore</td>
<td>22% Junior</td>
<td>19% Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>16% Arts and Letters</td>
<td>30% Natural and Health Sciences</td>
<td>16% Social Science, Math, and Ed</td>
<td>30% Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior online/hybrid courses</td>
<td>74% None or &lt; 1 year</td>
<td>12% 1-3 years</td>
<td>2% 4-5 years</td>
<td>0.1% 6-7 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON: CAMPUS

• Regional public university in the 17 campus UNC system, on the coast of North Carolina

• 17,915 students enroll in Fall 2020

• 56 undergraduate majors, 36 Master’s programs, 4 Doctoral programs

• Undergrad course offerings historically face-to-face

• Graduate programs face-to-face, hybrid, online, and online accelerated
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON: COVID SITUATION

Situation

• Switch to emergency remote learning happened while students were on Spring Break in early March

• Spring Break was extended for a week as extra time for faculty to prepare classes

Challenges

• Students who moved home experienced significant shifts in circumstances
  • Increased work hours
  • Care for younger siblings
  • Reduced access to reliable Internet

• University administration decided faculty could not require synchronous course sessions
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON:
ABOUT THE STUDY

Overall Purpose
• Specifically, we asked students to focus on a class that was successful in keeping them in touch with their instructor, content, and peers.

Survey
• Cross-sectional survey design to a representative sample of 6000 students taking classes in Spring
  • A mix of Likert-scale, ranking, and open-ended questions
    • Included elements of course facilitation from Sheriden and Kelly (2010)
  • 432 students participated for a 7% response rate
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON: DEMOGRAPHICS

• 94 Males
• 317 Females
• 354 Undergraduates
• 56 Master
• 3 Doctorate
• 3 Certificate
• 2 Post Baccalaureate
Was prior experience and training a factor for students? What played a key role in their transition?
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

Prior Experience/Training

• Yes, it was a factor. Most students come to the University of Tampa for the on-campus, in-person experience. Very few had any online learning experience.

Transition

• Disorientation from traveling and moving home. Adapting to be back home and having everyone in their family learning and working online.

• Managing the changing expectations of 5-7 instructors who were also learning-on-the-fly.

• Students cited lack of teacher presence, grading issue, lack of clarity, and technical difficulties/equipment issues.

• Personal and health issues (headaches, anxiety, & depression).
Prior Experience/Training

- Very few undergraduates had any online learning experience.

Transition

- Students who moved home experienced significant shifts in circumstances
  - Increased work hours
  - Care for younger siblings
  - Reduced access to reliable Internet
- Heavy course loads in a traditional face-to-face environment
- Many faculty had never taught online (or hybrid) and some did not regularly use LMS (Canvas)
WHAT WERE STUDENTS’ TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?
Importance of Connectedness

“Being required to have videos on and being required to participate made my classes more enjoyable and felt more regular. Classes that didn’t require that or didn’t allow that were very hard to sit through.” Overall, students responded positively to interactions with their professors.

Positive responses to virtual meetings and connection with professors

“Zoom was good for engaging (depends on professor personality). Sharing platforms like OneDrive, Google docs, etc. were perfect for group work. When professors gave a detailed outline of the week with assignment due dates was very beneficial.”
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

• Organization, planning, and communication were key components

“One of my teachers took the time to lay out her strategy for the rest of the semester, so that we would know what to expect. The same teacher also made it clear that she was open to questions, encouraging us to ask about it if we didn’t understand something. Begin able to type questions in the chat of a Zoom call surprisingly effective.”

• Better LMS orientation and structure

“User friendly interfaces” and “Providing multiple options for online learning platforms so that professors could choose one that fits their class best.”
“Improve infrastructure, consistent class formats, standards for quality online classes, training, communication response time.”
“Replace *** with a better LMS. Offer more hybrid and distance classes. Embrace technology in the classrooms to ensure that students "and teachers can take advantage of it so when these circumstances arise it doesn’t hinder learning.”
Coping with a pandemic and concentrating on coursework was exceptionally difficult

Even after the remote teaching semester ended, 46% of students categorized themselves as worried, struggling, or in a really dark place. Thirty-four percent indicated they were ‘Ok,’ and only 9% responded ‘great’
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

• Connectedness
  “The class was almost exactly like being there.”
  “She was very warm and genuine in her emails which made me feel closer to her and the class.”

• Instructor Responsiveness
  “My instructor would email back very fast, answer any of my questions, and also continuously sent out weekly announcements to address what was due at the end of the week.”
“She was extremely understanding and helpful. She wanted us to succeed and still understand the material but knew that we were facing a lot of changes and stressors.”
Online Learning Best Practices

“The organization from my teacher and the simplicity/straightforwardness of the course layout made the transition extremely smooth. He provided reminders for upcoming due dates and video instructions for things we did not cover in class … He also had an updated syllabus/course modules in a timely manner where it was easy to identify changes.”
WHAT SHOULD INSTRUCTORS AND ACADEMIC LEADERS TAKE AWAY AND CHANGE, BASED ON STUDENT FEEDBACK?
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA

Academic Leader Takeaways from Students:

1. Smaller class that allow for more connections/response/relationships with instructors
2. Improved instructor and student support for technology, but also for mental health
3. More remote, blended, and online offerings
4. Better technological infrastructure
5. Additional control of their learning (options)
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Academic Leader Takeaways from Students:

• Organization and well-designed courses were important
  • Consider utilizing some sort of quality design guide and process

• Value of synchronous connections
  • Record if not required
  • Use for community-building and connection
  • Interactive not lecture
“We All Had To Become Stronger Together”: Faculty Experiences Of Disruption And Innovation During The COVID-19 Pandemic

**Date:** Tuesday, November 10th  
**Time:** 3:30 PM to 4:15 PM  
**Conference Session:** Concurrent Session 6  
**Session Modality:** Virtual  
**Lead Presenter:** Aimee Whiteside (University of Tampa)  
**Co-presenters:** Lina Gomez-Vasquez (The University of Tampa), Suzanne Ensmann (The University of Tampa), Ronda Sturgill (The University of Tampa)  
**Track:** Engaged and Effective Teaching and Learning  
**Location:** Zoom Room 2

**Instructor Social Presence In Higher Education Emergency Remote Teaching**

**Date:** Wednesday, November 11th  
**Time:** 2:15 PM to 3:00 PM  
**Conference Session:** Concurrent Session 6  
**Session Modality:** Virtual  
**Lead Presenter:** Amy Garrett Dikkers (University of North Carolina Wilmington)  
**Co-presenter:** Sheri Conklin (University of North Carolina Wilmington)  
**Track:** Engaged and Effective Teaching and Learning  
**Location:** Zoom Room 2
QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, AND EXPERIENCES

Sheri Conklin, University of North Carolina Wilmington
conklins@uncw.edu

Suzanne Ensmann, University of Tampa
ensmann@ut.edu

Amy Garrett Dikkers, University of North Carolina Wilmington
garrettdikkersa@uncw.edu

Aimee Whiteside, University of Tampa
awhiteside@ut.edu