ORGANIC AND IN-HOUSE:

Building Online Learning Support Systems through Collaboration and Faculty Leadership at a Small Public Liberal Arts University

Lloyd Willis, Director of Center for Online and Innovative Learning
Scott L. Jones, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
WHO WE ARE

- Residential, public regional comprehensive in Greenwood, SC
- Approximately 3200 students
- Largely undergraduate, traditional, residential student population
- Approximately 38% historically underrepresented minority
- 44% of undergraduates receive Pell Grants
- 68% female students
- 19% enrollment growth in last 4 years
WHERE WE ARE GOING

• University Center of Greenville
• Hybrid
• Fully Online
• Graduate
• Degree Completion
LANDER UNIVERSITY’S ONLINE LEARNING HISTORY

2000-ish: First online nursing courses

By 2006: Small, scattered set of online offerings

2006-2009: Distance learning is largely associated with live face-to-face teaching with remote students

2010: First proposal for online learning coordination and promotion

2012: Second proposal...

2016: Third proposal...

2018: Fourth proposal, and the creation of the Center for Online and Innovative Learning
FALL 2018

• 973 total courses
• 53 online courses
• 39 hybrid courses
• 9% of our courses are taught in online or hybrid formats
• Rate of online offering growth since 2006: 1%
FALL 2018

• Five fully online Master’s programs:
  • Master of Science in Management
  • Master of Science in Emergency Management
  • Master of Nursing: Clinical Nurse Leader
  • Master of Education in Teaching and Learning with three concentrations:
    • Instructional Technology
    • Diverse Learners
    • Montessori Education
  • Master of Education in Montessori Education

• One fully online Bachelor’s program:
  • RN-BSN
Easy tasks:
- Find a tool to assess student readiness for online learning
- We adopted SmarterMeasure within a few months

Harder tasks:
- Develop an online teacher training program for faculty
- Develop an online learning handbook for faculty

The even harder (and unwritten) task:
- Convince the unconvinced that online learning works

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES: FALL 2018
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Understand institutional culture and values
Recognize resource limitations
Respect real pressures and necessities
Maximize available resources
Build relationships
Protect disciplinary and instructor autonomy
Develop systems that fit within existing institutional policies
Ground policies on the established guidelines of accreditation and governmental bodies
Avoid mandates, ultimatums, and threats
UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT SITUATION
EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE AND VALUES

• We believe in a traditional liberal arts curriculum.

• We are good at teaching traditional undergraduate students in face-to-face settings.

• We think many subjects cannot be taught online.

• We are suspicious of online learning in general.

• We do not like change.

• We are overworked and undercompensated.
RESOURCE LIMITATIONS
Center for Online and Innovative Learning
• No dedicated budget
• No administrative assistance
• No staff
• Loosely defined position within the university

ITS
• No instructional designers
• Just two LMS Admins

Faculty
• No underutilized faculty
• No budgets to subsidize training or course development
REAL PRESSURES AND NECESSITIES

Deans

• Have to find instructors, sometimes at the last minute

Full-Time Faculty

• Heavy teaching loads
  • 4+ courses per semester
  • 9-month contracts
  • Limited time for professional development before and after teaching ends
• Compensation levels
  • Low salaries across the institution for a long time

Adjunct faculty

• Low pay
• No time for professional development or training during contractual period before classes begin
MAXIMIZING RESOURCES
MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- ITS staff
  - Karen
    - Head Blackboard administrator, holds an M.Ed. in Instructional Design
    - 15+ years at the institution
  - Keith
    - Blackboard administrator
    - Primary Blackboard trainer
    - Extensive experience working 1-1 with faculty
    - 10+ years at Lander
  - Robin
    - Chief Information Officer
    - Has a budget!
- Cathy
  - Banner 9 administrator
MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Dedicated, passionate online teachers
  • Mike Farmer
  • Gina Dunn
  • Michael Brizek
  • Kelli Horne
  • James Romaine

General faculty dedication to the craft of teaching
MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Existing library resources and library staff
  • Web content expert
  • OER expert

Existing faculty-staff e-mail lists
  • Consistent basic communication

Existing budgets
  • ITS training budget
  • Provost’s budget
  • President’s discretionary budget
  • “Hidden” funds within academic units
MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Existing Blackboard training programs
  - Comprehensive training to all faculty members when they are hired
  - In-semester training opportunities
  - Access to licensed Blackboard online learning training

- Existing, underutilized tech tools
  - Respondus
  - Respondus Monitor
  - Proctor U
  - Skype for Business
  - Blackboard Collaborate
MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

• Mutable nature of the Center for Online and Innovative Learning
  • Allowed for flexibility and change
  • Allowed COIL to cross standard institutional boundaries
    • Academics
    • Enrollment Management
      • Admissions
      • Registrar’s Office
    • ITS
    • Business Office

• Lack of Dedicated budget
  • Necessitated partnership across units
WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
Building Relationships to Activate Change
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

President
• Interested in online growth and development
• Needs to know the broad strokes of

Provost
• Provides direct supervision of our Center for Online and Innovative Learning

Institutional Research
• Provides data to support all our initiatives and measure success
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

The COIL Advisory Committee

Representation from each college/school and ITS
  • Two representatives from the College of Math and Science
  • Two representatives from ITS, both LMS administrators

Strategic Supporters
  • Enthusiastic online math prof
  • Enthusiastic online art prof
  • LMS admins

Strategic Doubters
  • Jaded Physics prof
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

• ITS
  • Blackboard administrators
  • Chief Information Officer
  • Banner Administrator

• Enrollment Management
  • VP for Enrollment and Access Management
  • Director of Admissions
  • Director of Financial Aid
  • Dual Enrollment coordinator

• Student Academic Support
  • Head of advising
  • Individual advisors
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Faculty as a whole

• Consistent mass e-mail communication
  • Monthly LMS training sessions
  • Online teacher certification
  • Strategic updates

• Consistent presence in faculty meetings
  • Awarding certificates
  • Strategic updates

• Podcasts!
  • Once a week
  • Training tool
  • Information sharing tool
GENERAL PHILOSOPHIES

• Any new policy must:
  • Respect discipline and instructor autonomy
  • Fit within existing institutional rules and policies
  • Fit within existing guidelines of accreditation and governmental bodies
THESE PHILOSOPHIES MEAN...

• We must account for
  • Widely varying course learning goals
  • Widely varying disciplinary standards
    • Types of assessment
    • Accepted styles of teaching

• We must respect
  • Instructor autonomy
    • Full-time faculty
    • Adjunct faculty

• We must avoid
  • Overly legalistic rules and regulations
  • Intrusive, overbearing, and abusive supervision
  • Rules that cannot be enforced
EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL RULES AND POLICIES

The Faculty Handbook
Attendance Policy
Inclement Weather Policy
EXISTING GUIDELINES OF ACCREDITATION
AND GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

Guiding Documents
Lander University’s online learning policies and guidelines have been developed in accordance with the requirements and recommendations contained in the following documents:

- SACSCOC Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation
- SACSCOC Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement
- South Carolina Commission on Higher Education Guiding Principles for Distance Education
- U.S. Department of Education Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements C-RAC Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Learning
- AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation
MAKING NEW POLICIES FIT
EXAMPLE: ATTENDANCE

All Lander University instructors have the freedom to establish and enforce attendance policies for their individual courses within parameters set forth by individual colleges, schools, and departments. However, all courses, regardless of discipline and delivery method, must conform to basic attendance monitoring policies followed by the university.
ATTENDANCE, CONT.

Lander University adheres to the attendance tracking guidelines established in *Volume V of the U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid Handbook*, particularly item 34 CFR 668.22(l)(7). These guidelines allow for the tracking of academically related activity as an alternative to the type of classroom attendance that is commonly associated with conventional classroom-based education.
ATTENDANCE, CONT.

In a distance education context, documenting that a student has logged into an online class is not sufficient, by itself, to demonstrate academic attendance by the student. A school must demonstrate that a student participated in class or was otherwise engaged in an academically related activity, such as by contributing to an online discussion or initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a course-related question.
AVOID MANDATES, ULTIMATUMS, AND THREATS
EXAMPLE: CLASS SIZE

• Enrollment caps for online courses are to be determined by each course’s goals and learning objectives. However, decisions regarding class size should still adhere to these basic guidelines, which are designed to ensure compliance with NC-SARA’s C-RAC “Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education.”

• Online classes should be no larger than conventional, seated versions of the same course.

• Online classes may be smaller than conventional, seated versions of the same course when learning objectives and disciplinary standards demand online teaching and assessment practices that are more labor intensive than conventional teaching methods.

Quality online courses demand active faculty contributions to the learning environment and a level of instructor-student and student-student interaction that is equivalent to the expectations of a conventional, seated course. Course enrollment caps should be set at a level that allows these expectations to be maintained.
Online teaching at Lander University should conform to the university’s Guiding Principles for Course Quality, which are provided here. Bullet points have been inserted where best practices for online courses require further elaboration.

Clear policies, expectations, and grading criteria

All course syllabi must contain all policy statements required by the university.

• Syllabi for online courses must include the university’s Online Course Disclaimer and Inclement Weather Policy for Online Courses.

• Syllabi must fully explain all classroom procedures as they will be carried out in an online format.

• Syllabi for online courses must clearly explain any special equipment, resources, or services that students will need to acquire beyond the basic requirements of the university.
EXAMPLE: BEST PRACTICES

Timely communication and grading

Instructors are expected to respond to student communication within 48 hours during the work week. If reasonable circumstances such as travel or emergencies prevent this, students should be notified of the delay via automated messages (such as out-of-office notices) or other similar methods.

• Students in online classes can often feel disconnected and isolated. Because of this, it is important that instructors in online classes make every effort to respond to communication within 24 hours during the work week and make every effort to inform students of changes to their communication availability.
**EXAMPLE: BEST PRACTICES**

Meaningful engagement with instructors and peers

Content delivery should accommodate multiple learning styles and rely on more than one single delivery method.

- Content in online courses should be delivered in more than one single type of media. Courses should use a combination of reading material, audio, video, and learning activities.

- Student learning should be assessed with more than one type of assessment over the course of the semester.
Questions?

Lloyd Willis
lwillis@lander.edu

Scott Jones
sjones@lander.edu