Recommendations of Agriculture Professors in Teaching Online Courses Effectively

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Introduction

Demand for Online Education:

- There is a growing demand for online classes (Charron and Koo, 2007; Young and Duncan, 2014).

- University students' online enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment increased from 9.6% in 2002 to 32% in 2011 (Allen and Seaman, 2013).

- Higher education institutions continue to meet the student demand for online learning (Capra, 2011).

Introduction

Challenges of Teaching Online:

- Teaching online is different from classroom teaching (Nishikant, 2009; Sammons, 2003).

- When teaching online, instructors have to play a different role from their traditional one (Sammons, 2003).

- Limited student-teacher interaction is a common concern for students and teachers (Capra, 2011).

Introduction

Views about Effective Online Teaching:

- When instructors redesign their face-to-face classes for online delivery, the major question they encounter is what instructional activities are effective in teaching online.

- The instructional strategies that create learner's inquiry, expand learning experience, and reflection of learning experience were found effective in online teaching (Keeton, 2004)

- Variety of instruction is need to foster student engagement, stimulate intellectual development, and build rapport with students (Brinthaupt et al., 2011).

Introduction

Effective Online Teaching Strategies:

- Clearly specified learning goals, threaded discussions, and complementary use of technologies such as videos are necessary instructional activities (Hutton, 1999).

- Power Point presentations and video recorded lectures were the most beneficial online instructional activities (Glass and Sue, 2008).

- Students like quizzes and they had a positive effect on student learning (Salas-Morera et al., 2012).

Purpose and OUR OBJECTIVES

Determine the best practices in planning and delivering effective online agriculture courses.

The main objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify the greatest challenges in teaching courses online.
2. Determine the best practices in planning and teaching online courses,

Methods and Procedure

- The modified Delphi techniques was used.
- The study was conducted with a group of 20 selected faculty members in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.
- Three rounds were used.

"I know nothing about the subject, but I'm happy to give you my expert opinion."

Delphi Study Questions

- **First Round:**
    1. What do you see as the greatest challenges in teaching courses online?
    2. What do you consider to be the "best practices" in planning, organizing and teaching online education courses?

- **Third Round Scale:**
    1. Not important at all
    2. Slightly important
    3. Somewhat important
    4. Important
    5. Extremely important

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Challenges:

- Time commitment for delivering and managing the course

- Determining academic integrity violations

- Encouraging student involvement and creating an interactive environment for establishing rapport with students

- Emulation of the face-to-face classroom environment in online setting

When we develop online courses, we need to pay attention on these challenges.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Best Practices

- Organizing the course content on a software platform such as Moodle is necessary to facilitate delivery process.

- Learning objectives should be specified and followed through to help students follow the course.

- Response time for students to complete the assignments and instructors to provide feedback should be clearly stated and followed to manage time efficiently.

- Introduction of the instructor and providing relevant credentials for teaching the course is important for gaining students' trust.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

- The instructor needs to keep the course content up-to-date and demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter throughout the course for retaining the attention of students.

- Providing a mix of low and high stakes assessments with rubrics on how the assignments will be graded and examples is needed to students understand the expectations of the instructor

- Use of a variety of assessment tools relate to the course objectives and suited to the digital format of the class is necessary to facilitate learning.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Best Practices

- Grading assignments promptly is needed to provide timely feedback.
- Instructors need to timely response to student queries for being responsive to students.
- Students need to hear from instructors throughout the course to help students feel like a person worthy of the instructor's attention.
- It is important to make assignment and test due dates flexible for accommodating student needs.
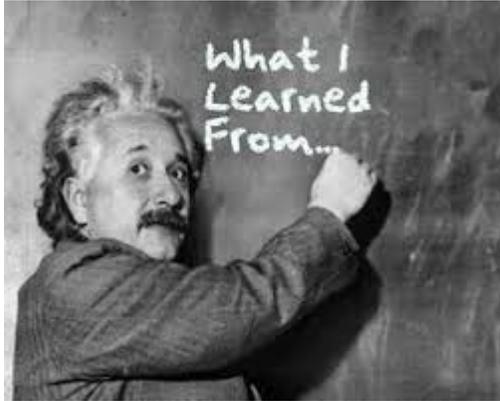
Take-Home Message

Use Best Practices for Managing Challenges:

- Understand the challenges of managing time and creating an interactive learning environment

- Plan to use technology for managing time efficiently and creating an interactive learning environment

Questions?