

ONLINE TEACHING IN AN ONLINE WORLD

Bonk, Curtis J. (2001). *Online teaching in an online world*. Bloomington, IN: CourseShare.com (<http://www.courseshare.com/report.php>).

ABOUT THE REPORT

The focus of this report is on what is missing from current web-based learning. That is:

- How can we move from courses that simply warehouse or register students to courses that are more collaborative and interactive?
- How can faculty share their online learning successes and failures with other instructors?

This report also has relevance for administrators:

- What training and reward structures foster successful online learning?
- Who makes the decisions about which web-based teaching tools to acquire?
- What types of support should be provided for online instructors?

THE SAMPLE

Number

- N = 222

Source

- 64% came from MERLOT
- 36% came from the World Lecture Hall

Type of Institution

- 70% from public institutions
- 21% were from private institutions
- 9% or from other types of instructional situations

Years of Teaching Experience

- 36% of the sample had more than 20 years of teaching experience
- 34% had 10-20 years of experience
- Only 10% had fewer than four years of teaching experience

Age

- Nearly half were over 50 years old
- Another 44% were between 36-50 years old

Gender

- 60% males
- 40% females

Rank

- 60% were ranked at the professor at or associate professor levels
- 70% were assistant professors
- 8% were adjunct instructors
- 5% were lecturers
- 10% are in other categories

Level of Education

- Nearly 70% had a doctoral degree
- 6% were ABD
- 22% had a Master's degree
- 2% had a Bachelor's degree

Level of Undergraduate Teaching Experience

- 94% had undergraduate teaching experience
- 52% had graduate teaching experience

- 40% had experience teaching non-credit or other types of workshops, programs, or courses

Level of Online Teaching Experience

- 40% have taught partially online
- 18% have taught completely online
- 40% have done both
- 24% have no online teaching experience

SHARING

More than half of the respondents have shared resources via either MERLOT or the World Lecture Hall.

Why Do They Share?

- As a means of professional growth
- To share at a coach who theories or strategies

ATTITUDES ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING

Course Ownership

- Only 16% felt that online courses were the property of their institution.
- 63% indicated that their institution lacked clear ownership policies regarding online courses.
- 21% said they were unsure about ownership policies at their institution. Still, only 3% do not plan to abide by the ownership guidelines of their institution.

Quality

- Only 32% agree that learning is improved in online environments, 29% disagree, and 40% are unsure.
- Almost instructors support Bachelor's and Master's degrees earned entirely online. However, 62% were opposed to doctoral degrees earned entirely online.

Preferred Compensation for Online Efforts

- 34% prefer additional salary
- 14% prefer stipends
- 15% prefer royalties
- 10% prefer release time
- 4% prefer recognition

Web-Related Skills

- 93% feel comfortable sending and receiving email file attachments
- 62% were comfortable creating HTML (web) pages
- However, less than 50% felt highly capable of using an online courseware system, moderating a web-based asynchronous discussion forum, or posting an online chat session.

Time Commitment

- Over 80% indicated that teaching online was more time consuming than teaching traditional courses.

Attrition

- The majority felt that the dropout rate is higher in fully online courses than partially online courses.

Internet Access

- 78% had Internet access in their current or most recent classroom.
- 93% had access to an Internet-connected lab for class use.
- 97% had access to the Internet from home.

Course Management Systems

- 83% said their institution provided either a web-based platform or courseware system for web-augmented or online courses.
- Of those institutions providing access to courseware, only 27% offered access to more than one tool, 10% to three tools, and 5% to four or more tools.

Teaching Load

27% anticipate that more than 1/4 of their teaching load for the next year would be allocated to online courses. This rose to 44% in two years, 64% in five years, and 73% in ten years.

Freelance Instruction

Only 16% had been freelance or adjunct instructors on the web in the past.

However, nearly 75% were interested in teaching as freelance or adjunct online instructors within the next five years.

INSTITUTIONAL MOTIVES AND DECISION MAKING

Primary Institutional Motives For Online Education

- 93% increasing access to education
- 41% profit
- 62% learning

(Percentages were slightly lower when asked about their home institutions)

Reasons For University Investment

- 67% access to external resources
- 63% improved efficiency in teaching and research
- 50% providing distance education to a potentially unlimited audience

Web-Based Teaching Decision Making

Key players in ____% of the decisions to use and support web-based teaching:

- 63% administrators
- 40% faculty and departments
- 27% chief technology officers
- 20% teaching and learning center directors

USEFULNESS OF WEB-BASED TOOLS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Useful Online Class Tools

- 85% posting syllabi
- 70% online cases, problems, or questions
- 70% file uploading and downloading
- 69% online lecture notes
- 47% online self-test tools
- 47% online tests and quizzes

Tools for online student course evaluations and databases were used less often.

NOTE: The percentage of respondents who viewed collaboration and sharing tools is useful was higher than the percentage that actually use these tools, suggesting that the development of such tools should become a priority.

Useful collaboration and sharing tools

Instructor' perceive a need for new tools for:

- instructor to instructor collaboration
- students to share stories with other students
- interactive feedback
- annotations on student work
- instructor test-making collaboration
- instructor task collaboration
- online technology demonstrations

Which Collaboration Tools Are Used Most Often?

- 61% discussion forums
- 46% tools for providing feedback and annotations on student work
- 46% tools for student teamwork or collaboration
- 32% chat

NOTE: 52% use instructor profiles and 34% use student profiles, but few indicate that they are highly useful in their teaching.

Useful online instructional activities

Online activities ranked as highly important:

- Online simulations
- Data analysis
- Laboratories
- Performances
- Critical and creative thinking activities

NOTE: actual use of these tools is far lower, indicating more critical areas for tool development efforts.

Useful web resources

- 83% search engines
- 74% online articles and journal links
- 61% discipline-specific resources
- 58% web sites and resources from colleagues
- 57% online glossaries
- Tools that received less than 50% ratings include tools for students to suggest web links or recommend books, and online news groups.

OBSTACLES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Obstacles To Web-Based Teaching

- 52% preparation time
- 40% lack of support for technical problems and course development
- 37% time to learn to use the web
- 29% inability to display the web in the classroom
- 24% lack of training in how to use the web
- 18% inadequate hardware in one's office
- 15% lack of software
- 17% other problems

Faculty from smaller institutions were significantly more likely to cite "technical and course development support" as obstacles. Faculty from public institutions were significantly more likely to mention "time to learn to use the web" as an obstacle.

Support For Web-Based Teaching And Research

Main supports requested by instructors:

- 70% release time
- 68% development grants and stipend
- 68% recognition and tenure, salary, and promotion decisions
- 60% assistance with technical problems
- 60% time to learn about and use the web
- 58% instructional design support
- 45% training on how to use the web in teaching
- 31% greater access to computers for students
- 31% online resources
- 27% email notifications of technology changes
- 13% help with chat rooms

NOTES: Faculty members in public institutions expected many more forms of support than those in private institutions. Institutional size also made a difference in terms of the support instructors deemed necessary: at smaller schools, faculty emphasized instructional design support; at medium-sized schools they emphasized time to learn about and use the web; finally, at large schools faculty indicated that they needed recognition, grants, and released time.

ONLINE COMMUNITIES, SERVICES, AND RESOURCES NEEDED

Online Communities for Resource Sharing

- 82% express interest becoming part of a free community to share course resources and teaching ideas

What Would They Like From Such a Community?

- 77% pedagogical ideas
- 64% answers to teaching problems
- 62% expert advice

- 56% classroom management tips
- 42% professional recognition
- 45% online newsletters
- 90% tools for online storytelling

Useful Web-Based Services, Resources, And Information

- 73% online course design and development help
- 71% electronic papers, journals, and technical reports
- 70% online teaching help
- 59% web-based survey and evaluation tools
- 59% online simulations and experiments
- 59% downloadable freeware and shareware
- 54% online library resources
- 52% conference information
- 51% online bookstores
- 51% discounted hardware and software
- 50% online course listings
- 49% trial or demonstration software
- 48% online workshops and institutes
- 46% online mentoring and tutoring services
- 45% freelance teaching opportunities
- 35% online university bookstores and merchandise
- 21% access to online courseware company listings
- 19% discounted instructional resources

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

Based on these findings, the report lists seven key recommendations for college instructors, administrators, and institutions:

1. **Instructor Training:** institutions should provide instructional design help and support, provide guidelines, as well as offer institutes, courses, and online mentoring by early adopters.
2. **Instructor Recognition:** institutions need to consider how they recognize online teaching efforts in the promotion and tenure process. Institutions should also offer incentives such as release time, grants, stipends, and other forms of assistance.
3. **Instructor Sharing of Expertise and Resources:** institutions should create ways for faculty to electronically share services, expertise, resources, mentoring, activities, and tools.
4. **Online Learning Policies:** institutions need clear guidelines for policies regarding course ownership and royalties and freelance online teaching. They also need to clearly articulate why courseware tools and policies have been adopted.
5. **Online Learning Research:** before adopting new policies, institutions should review existing research. They might also provide internal mini-grants for research and make results available to all faculty.
6. **Online Courseware Development Partnerships:** institutions should seek partnerships with courseware and other e-learning companies to serve as beta test sites for new tools in return for lower courseware fees. They might also form consortia with other institutions.
7. **Online Learning Pedagogy:** institutions need to demand or perhaps develop different types of pedagogical tools for e-learning--- tools that foster student higher-order thinking and collaboration.