

# Challenges and Solutions For Faculty Instructing Online Courses at Oklahoma City Community College

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*FACULTY FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS*



OKLAHOMA CITY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## METHODOLOGY

At the request of the Online Implementation Team, faculty who had previously taught or were currently teaching an online course were invited to participate in one of three on-campus focus groups. Invitations were sent out in various formats:

- 1) Flyers were sent to Division Assistants with a list of online faculty (full-time and adjunct) requesting that the flyers be placed in their mailboxes. Extra flyers were included for those who may not have been on the list.
- 2) Invitation was sent through Outlook to all online faculty (full-time and adjunct) using the SII list compiled by Jane Hinojosa. They were also encouraged to contact colleagues who may have been left off of the list.
- 3) In addition, the Co-Chairs of the Online Implementation Team (Anita Philipp and Kathy Wullstein) sent an email to Division Deans requesting that they encourage faculty to participate.

Following are the dates, times, locations, and number of instructors who ultimately participated in each focus group.

Focus Group 1	October 27, 2008	2:00pm	CU3	8 participants
Focus Group 2	November 4, 2008	2:30pm	CU3	9 participants
Focus Group 3	November 6, 2008	3:00pm	CU1	4 participants

## TERMS DEFINED

This report has been divided into nine categories that encompass various barriers or challenges that instructors in the focus groups identified. Under each category, there is a table with six columns. Below are the definitions for the terms used as the headers for these six columns.

- 1) Challenge – these were areas that faculty felt presented a challenge or even a barrier to students being successful in an online course or faculty being successful in teaching an online course.
- 2) % Students /Faculty Impacted – percent of students or faculty that were believed to be impacted by the identified challenge. In many cases, it is a range as faculty had different perspectives as to the percent affected.
- 3) Knowledge/Action Strategies – specific information the faculty found helpful in overcoming the challenge and would want another faculty or student to know before enrolling in an online course.
- 4) Changes – without regard to resources, faculty brainstormed on what action OCCC could take to either remove the challenge entirely or to help the student/faculty be successful in overcoming it.
- 5) Effective Support – what currently works at OCCC that helps a student/faculty overcome the identified challenge.
- 6) # of Groups – the number of focus groups in which faculty identified the specific challenge.

## COMMUNICATION

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
<p>Boundary issues-students expect instructor is available 24/7 and complains if instructor does not respond in a “timely manner”</p> <p>Lack of online communication etiquette from students</p>	50-100%	<p>Tell students office hours</p> <p>Put on syllabus that you will respond within 48 hours</p> <p>Tell students when you’ll be communicating and follow through</p> <p>Tell students not to call on weekends</p>		Some syllabi addresses these issues	2
So many ways to communicate can be confusing to students	75%	<p>Faculty should communicate through all venues</p> <p>Faculty members need to repeat important or helpful info.</p> <p>Do syllabi quiz</p>	<p>Have training sessions to learn what works for everyone</p> <p>Have an online class to teach instructors how to teach online</p> <p>Have guidelines and expectations</p> <p>Follow the expectations you set</p>	Have quizzes	2

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
			<p>Require instructors to enroll in an online course so they can see it from the student's point of view</p> <p>If an instructor receives low score on SII, no more teaching on-line</p>		
Difficult to establish relationship with online student/ Hard to keep students straight	75%	<p>Establish social interaction via discussion board, etc.</p> <p>Students and Instructors post a bio sheet with a picture</p>	When student enrolls post student id picture in student bio	Invite students to come in to meet instructor	1

## COURSE

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of consistency with layout of online course	100%	Students should: 1) explore the whole course at the beginning 2) read instructions 3) ask questions	Have a course designer and have them create a course and be able to tweak to what the faculty wants  Have one course designer per division	Ask another professor or student for help  Question/ answer posted to review	2
Lack of standardization- when the week begins and ends (if taking multiple courses)	100%	Student should keep a calendar for each course and one for all courses	Have a consensus on when a week starts and make it a standard	Have quizzes	1
Easy for students to cheat online, especially when testing online	50-100%	Proctor tests  Instructors should not put so much weight on quizzes  Instructor has to assume the student uses the book	Retina scans for identification in testing  Check with experts on best practices	Invite students to come in to meet instructor	2

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
It's hard for faculty to know what is an appropriate workload for student	100 % for nursing 50%				1
On campus participation required of students/ Not all online classes are totally online	50%		Place a disclaimer in schedule Let advisement know status Early access to MineOnline roster to communicate with student Online disclaimer as well		2
Subject content difficult for online learning for students	20%				1
Lack of flexibility on due dates/ Assignments due midweek/ Students need the weekend for the course	25%				1
Control of timeline for content availability	15%				1

## LIFE ISSUES

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Student's life events (babies, marriage, divorce, etc.)	80%	<p>Student and instructor should have a plan B and a plan C</p> <p>Student should communicate with instructor early</p> <p>Student should not give up</p>	<p>Make it easier for instructors to deal with incomplete grades</p> <p>Have students complete modules in "one hour credit sessions"</p>	If a student has late work or misses a test, show documentation regarding life event	1



## PREPARATION

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of student preparation	75-90%	<p>Syllabus has disclaimer this is harder</p> <p>Address in orientation how many hours student is expected to spend</p> <p>Initial assessment (English)</p>	<p>Should be required orientation before enrolling in online class</p> <p>Have Angel workshop prior to starting class</p> <p>Knowledge assessment</p> <p>Catalog states problems one page, questions</p>		2
Not enough time – underestimated time (students and faculty)	75-80%	<p>Do not wait until the last minute to do or submit the work</p> <p>Set aside a time</p> <p>Create a schedule</p> <p>Student and instructor should print syllabus, assignment sheet, schedule, and calendar</p>	<p>Faulty need access sooner to their classes</p> <p>Student required to take SCL first semester</p> <p>Use the milestone feature on Angel</p>	<p>Using the calendars</p> <p>Using milestones on Angel</p>	1

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of student discipline	75%		Calendaring Announcements Don't extend timeline	Calendaring	1
Lack of students reading ability	60%				1
Lack of ability to read on computer	33%		Orientation Handouts Initial assessment /content	Reading proficiency	1
Not buying books	20%				1
Students start late	20%	Need to know to log on immediately Don't enroll late	Notice immediately appears when you enroll that you have assignments due		1
Students not prepared for next class	10%		MineOnline should automatically drop students from next course if they don't receive a passing grade on prerequisite Instructor has ability to do reassessment for alert		1

## MYTHS

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Students believe online is easier	100%	Know that it is harder  Student must be disciplined and self motivated  Two levels of learning  Set aside specific time similar to regular class time  If it's too good to be true, it most likely is	Assessment/orientation/ advising  Online is not the same as on campus  Have students tell how it really is during the student orientation	Using the calendars  Using milestones on Angel	3

## POLICIES

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of definition for computer proficiency	80-90%		<p>Create/adhere to definition of computer proficiency</p> <p>Required from students/faculty</p>	<p>Using the calendars</p> <p>Using milestones on Angel</p>	2
Lack of advisement for online students	50%		<p>Advisement session for online students</p> <p>Communication between faculty and advisors regarding problems</p> <p>Course specific advisement</p> <p>Division meetings to communicate about advisement</p> <p>Student profile reflects if advised</p>	Early warning	1

## TECHNOLOGY

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Technology issues with platform-upload/download	100%	Don't freak out Contact instructors Be patient Check back soon	24/7 monitoring of system Train more trouble shooters	Denny is always available for help	1
System collapses on Sundays	100%	Be aware and prepare Complete assignments before due date	Make deadlines during work week so tech support is available Fix it		1
Challenge for instructor to adapt to Master course	Lockdown courses 100%	Don't make it harder than it is Make all at least a little flexible Take course & make it your own	No locked down Master courses Flexibility should be at start Monitoring system		1

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of tech support-faculty & students	100%	Faculty: -Know your mentor Share problems with all students for remedies Instructors personally go see tech support Modification of course (flexible) Make student aware if it's a tech problem they will not be penalized Be patient Be polite to tech support	Discussion board to help each other out 24/7 tech support Someone on call 24 hrs Hire structural designer Increase tech support Increase mentors	Specific hours faculty available to meet tech support Online staff is helpful	2
Platform change for faculty	95%		Change infrequently! Provide training	CS faculty set aside weekly meetings brainstorming Incentive pay	1

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Different versions of software for student and instructor/ Lack of instructor software or plug-in in the office and at home	50-75%	Students communicate with faculty Faculty initiate the discussion Know there are plug ins to resolve issues Contact IT for updates	Give students and faculty all software and computers they need Conduct WOW sessions to prepare for updates		2
Outdated computers, both instructor and student	25-65%				1

## TRAINING - FACULTY

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of ongoing education/training for instructors to include specific training on Angel/RTF	95-100%	Peer sharing Find a mentor-choose carefully Plan ahead	Set up WOW session for faculty Modules for creating Monthly discussion group Add lots more personnel to IT staff Have online training course Have faculty compensation for their time Need ongoing mentoring	Monthly discussion group CS faculty set aside weekly meetings brainstorming Incentive pay Regular meetings Mentoring for faculty	3
Lack of communication or guidelines for instructors	100%	Find mentor and share secrets to help each other	Department/Division /College guidelines provided		1



Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Lack of best practices for teaching online	50%	Put yourself in students position	Online mentoring instructional for faculty and students  Careful selection for online instructors (requirements)  Need to monitor instructors to help them		1
Collaborative activities	50%		WOW session  Library services  Site geared to online students		1
Lack of academic freedom	40-50%	Teach on campus  Our purpose is the student  May require sacrifices  May learn something			1
Adjuncts take on too many classes between OCCC and other colleges	25%	Don't do it  Care about your students  Make sure you have training for online courses	More professional development		1

Challenge	%Students / Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Test timelines/faculty unable to extend in Angel					1

## TRAINING - STUDENTS

Challenge	%Students/ Faculty Impacted	Knowledge/Action Strategies	Changes	Effective Support	# of Groups
Students lack of proper technology and lack of knowledge of minimum requirements for hardware/software	40-50%	Look at requirements before enrolling		Requirements on home page  Initial technology assessment	2
Lack of student computer knowledge/providence	33-50%	Take course in different format	Mandatory assessment before enrolling /Proficiency test  Make part of student success course  Advisors should ask student about level of computer proficiency  Education/training  Brown bag student sessions  Prerequisite computer class		2
Students fail to log in the first week or until the end of the week	30%	Student must log on by the first day of the course			1