Conventional teaching promotes the separation of online and traditional classes. Initially, I believed in the efficacy of that strategy. However, after teaching online and traditional classes within the same semester, I decided there is a better way to share knowledge with students. Some professors believe they should teach the way they were taught. I believe changing times call for changing methods. We need to use existing and emerging technology and make those tools available to all class formats, because all students need the same opportunities to succeed. Today, I am blurring the lines between my online and traditional classes.

At first, I provided online students with the publisher’s ancillaries and added information to tailor them for my courses. I reviewed concepts with PowerPoint and utilized the few MP3 tutorials provided by the publisher. I was available for assistance, but essentially the online students were on their own to understand concepts.

But I quickly recognized that my online and traditional students did not have the same advantages. For example, online students had access to web links which provided reinforcement to concepts, while students on campus had the enriched classroom experience.

I can communicate via voice or text with my students. I can pose questions and allow students to provide the answers and record this whole process. Students can participate in an online test review by calling in and using the chat feature or a microphone.

The software also gives me the capability to record complete lectures. In an effort to bring the classroom experience to online students, I began making special recordings that incorporated anecdotes and examples along with the lecture information that I typically shared with the traditional classes. However, instead of creating a copy of each of my traditional class lectures, I recorded a chapter at a time.

Some of my online and on-campus students work together in laboratory classes. They began to compare the different tools available to them in each of the class formats.

My on-campus students requested access to the online lectures, so I made the lecture narrations available to all of my students. When an online student calls me with a question about a concept I know other students find challenging, I use a webcam to record the question and answer session which frequently includes zooming in on figures in the book, circling and highlighting text in the PowerPoint presentations or drawing to explain the answer.

Previously, this explanation would only have been available to my online students. Now, students in both class formats can view the question and answer sessions. I also conducted and recorded online test reviews for my online students. Today, those recordings are available to all of my students.

I initially believed that if I provided the narrated lectures to traditional students that class attendance would drop. That did not happen.

The on-campus students showed me their media players with the lecture and explained that they were using them to help elucidate difficult concepts, for review or to hear what they missed on the few occasions when they could not attend classes.

Here are some of the reactions from online students:

“They [audio notes] gave a sense of almost being right there in a classroom listening to a teacher discuss a topic.”

“Anything that seemed unclear in the chapter was explained in the audio notes in a way that made perfect sense.”

“I thought these [audio notes] were VERY helpful. Reading words in a book, for a non science person, is difficult. Hearing the instructor’s voice and how she explains the content was very helpful.”

And here are some comments from on-campus students:

“They [recorded test reviews] are very helpful because it is like I’m studying for my test with my professor.”

“I did not use them [recorded lectures and test reviews] for the first test but I did for the second test and between the lectures and the recorded chat review I received 12 points higher on the second test.”

“It [recorded lecture] was very helpful. I wish every professor did this for us.”

“I like the [test review] format of having others answer the questions to see if I agree or disagree before the instructor gives the answer.”

I compared the performance and attrition outcomes of students for several semesters prior to and after my merged online/on-campus teaching pedagogy and noticed a pattern. Students in both venues showed a significant increase in retention and test scores.

Today, I am blurring the lines between my online and traditional classes. I bring it all together for them regardless of the class format.

I want all my students to have every advantage to learn the material. Online and traditional classes are more alike than they are different. There is not one student population that exclusively takes classes in one format. The same student populations are utilizing both formats, and the tools they need to succeed are equivalent.

I believe the model pedagogy includes a combination of online and traditional teaching and that the two should complement each other.  

Blurring the Lines Between Online and Traditional Classroom Pedagogy

Deborah Cardenas
Professor of Biology, COLUM COLLEGE

Pima, from page 3, col. 5

Other emails showed how the shooting was on everyone’s minds.

“Hugs to you all during this difficult time,” wrote Kris Swank, the northwest campus library director, on Jan. 12.

She said in the same email that if any media members request to speak to library workers, they should refer them to the college’s marketing coordinator. “You may also opt to simply say, ‘No comment,’” she advised them.

In another email, the head of the school’s Fitness and Sport Sciences Department warns colleagues to avoid the media, after she received a reporter’s call at home.

“Let’s keep ourselves out of this,” writes Susan L. Heinrich, according to the documents. “Certainly feel free to contact me if you are unsure of who to contact for assistance. If you put them (reporters) off, they will likely look elsewhere for a quick quote.”

Howell suggested in one email that police staffing on campus be increased, and she urged that a plan be drafted for “handling media.”

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Point of view