Today, new technologies and high-powered innovators in higher education surround us and bombard us with changing options and challenges at every turn. The pace of change is so fast that most university administrators cannot keep abreast of how faculty and students are utilizing technology tools and what tools are emerging as important or dominant on campus. Most senior university administrators have given up trying to regulate devices and technology innovation among students and faculty. Good leaders are stretching themselves to find new and exciting ways to encourage exploration of technology tools.

But this meteoric increase in technology tools, innovation, and experimentation in higher education is a recent phenomenon. Less than 20 years ago, most institutions of higher education resisted mightily almost everything related to online learning and what was perceived, at the time, to be the unwanted intrusion of technology into the protected realm of the faculty and "sage on the stage" teaching methods.

As an administrator charged with launching online courses and programs at National University and Chapman University College in the early and mid-2000s, the challenge seemed immense and the pace of change glacial. While students were crying out for online course options, faculty, department leadership and even the institution leadership that hired me to develop online courses and programs provided, at best, lukewarm support.

While institutions knew that a sea change in the delivery of lecture content and the role of the faculty member in a technologically enhanced classroom was imminent, they were conflicted and terrified about being early adopters. “Sage on the stage” was the accepted approach to teaching university-level students since before Aristotle and other Greek philosophers popularized teaching and learning of subjects and theory. How could this newfangled “guide on the side” approach to learning via the internet appeal to faculty who spent their career taking the podium, looking out over the eager faces of their classroom flock (now mostly surfing the web) before thoughtfully providing the wisdom needed to master the theories and subjects at hand?
As I began my appointment as Dean of Online Learning at Chapman University College in the fall of 2004, it was clear that if there was to be any hope of convincing faculty and departments to give online education a try, I needed a “champion.” I needed to find a respected faculty member who could handle the criticism and ridicule of faculty peers and who could set aside a career of “sage on the stage” success to try this “guide on the side” thing in an authentic and inspirational way.

I set about trying to draft a champion. I attended department meetings and faculty senate meetings, and I spoke to a dizzying array of stakeholders. I evangelized my ministry of change and online education as the new paradigm for adult and non-traditional student learning. I hung out in the lunch room when I thought a good candidate might need a cup of coffee from the machine, extra change at the ready, just in case. The fall of 2004 passed and New Year’s 2005 came and went, and I labored on without a champion. Progress was glacial; resistance was everywhere.

But in the spring of 2005, a new faculty member showed up in my office with a beautiful story. Myron Orleans had just retired from 30 years in the California State University System. His love for teaching and learning was as strong as ever, and he was too young of spirit to retire. He had joined the faculty at Chapman University College because he wanted to think and feel differently about teaching. He wanted to try something new. Champion found! The rest, as they say, is “history.”

Myron developed and taught the first fully online course at Chapman University College, and it was the home run that fundamentally changed the institution and the lives of so many students, faculty, staff, and administrators. As Myron’s excitement and wonder at the options and possibilities for online education grew, so did the program. By fall of 2006 we offered over 100 online courses and began to push for fully online programs. Somewhere in 2007, we achieved escape velocity, and the balance of power and the accepted type of course offering shifted from face-to-face education to blended or fully online course delivery. By 2010, the proliferation of online courses approached 50 percent at Chapman University College (which was renamed Brandman University in 2010), and at some of the most conservative institutions of higher learning, the percentage of students taking at least one online course was approaching 25 percent.

The revolution that Myron and I initiated at Chapman University College was happening in similar and different ways at institutions around the globe. Online administrators found their champions in innovative faculty members who pushed their institutions to be early adopters. Institutions everywhere brought up their programs and jumped immediately into research and scholarship around teaching and learning with technology. Less than 20 years on from Myron and my inauspicious beginning, this book captures a mature and impressive compilation of online learning research taking place at the broadest cross sections of institutions. This book is testament to the depth and breadth of the changes and innovations seeded by Dr. Orleans.
Today, Dr. Myron Orleans, as the Editor of *Cases on Critical and Qualitative Perspectives in Online Higher Education*, leads us forward in another important way. *Cases on Critical and Qualitative Perspectives in Online Higher Education* is the editor’s effort at creating a best practices and leadership treatise for online educators. The strength of the book is in the in-depth analytical narratives of the personally-acquired experiences of e-learning. The book is candid and seeks to offer helpful insight into four important areas of online programming: getting started, conflicts and challenges, administrative issues, and evaluation.

In my current appointment as the Executive Director of Cal State Online, I hear much throughout the California State University System from faculty and administrators as they struggle to come to terms with online education as a core and integral part of their institution. This book talks directly to the current priorities and concerns of administrators and faculty as they work to develop and innovate online programs, increase faculty participation, define the role of the faculty member in online course work, grow enrollment in new online programs, and find ways to evidence and report quality.

There are enormous riches to be mined in this volume. May you be encouraged, enlightened, inspired, and impressed by what you encounter in the following pages.

*Ruth Claire Black*

*Cal State Online, USA*

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**Ruth Claire Black** joined Cal State Online as the program’s founding Executive Director in December of 2011. Prior to heading up Cal State Online, the California State University System wide online education initiative, Ruth was Associate Vice Chancellor at Chapman University and Brandman University. During her tenure at Chapman and Brandman, Ruth focused on developing, marketing, and administering online and strategic partnership programs as well as partnership and strategic alliance development with particular emphasis on military education and vocational and workforce development programs. Ruth has extensive experience establishing and reporting rigorous, accredited, online, blended, competency-based, and offsite degree programs. Ruth’s academic and research interests focus on embedded digital text options for online courses and comparative analysis of outcomes and student satisfaction in courses with digital content versus physical textbooks. Ruth has a BA in Political Science from UC Irvine and a JD from Vanderbilt Law School.