Preface

In the Internet Age, the notion that a traditional classroom with face-to-face instruction, by itself, is no longer adequate for higher education teaching and learning as one that has considerable intrinsic merit. Institutions of higher education, therefore, realize that lecture-based teaching methods alone will not prepare students for the challenges they will face. The State University of New York and the University of Illinois, for instance, have entirely abolished the separation of online programs from campus-based programs, awarding the same degree for both programs and allowing students themselves to combine campus and online coursework as best suits their individual needs and choices (Theil, 2008). Furthermore, in Theil's words:

The move to such hybrids will be driven by students questioning why they should sit in lectures taking notes three times a week when they can go once and do the rest at their own pace online…. By combining face-to-face interaction with new online options in more powerful ways, these programs should offer the best of both worlds—rendering moot today's debate over whether virtual or in-person degrees are best. (p. 65)

In spite of both substantive and specious concerns about the pervasive ongoing role of computers in modern life, the Internet is already well established in higher education and promises to continue to fill all the crevices of the educational fabric (Rudestam & Schoenholtz-Read, 2002, p. 9). Higher education is now available at the students' fingertips, as technology enables them to do their tasks more efficiently, effectively, comfortably, and quickly (Sethy, 2008, p. 29). Moreover, the rapid growth in the use of new technologies, particularly in the use of the Internet and Web-based communication, has provided higher education instructors and institutions with new options that enable them to experiment with the most suitable mix of instructional approaches and learning environments.

An especially important aspect of today's higher education environment is that students are more diverse than ever before. In the United States, for example, in addition to a more diversified student population in terms of ethnicity, social status, and expectation, the proportion of non-traditional university students has been steadily increasing. Higher education institutions are thus being challenged, not only by the rapidly developing information and communication technologies, but also by the non-traditional character of today's university students as well (Orhan, 2008). These changing student demographics and expectations, as well as technological innovation and the imperatives of a lifelong learning agenda, are transforming higher education for the 21st century.

THE COMING OF THE AGE OF BLENDED LEARNING

Internet-based online distance education is certainly becoming an important long-term strategy for many institutions of higher education throughout the world. However, *blended learning* promises to be an even

more significant modality than an entirely online learning approach. Blended learning is not entirely new. "Back in the last century, the term 'blended learning' was invented, accompanied with typical e-learning hype…. It was thought that developing a blended learning solution was all about choosing from an ever-widening selection of methods and media" (LINE Communications, 2006, p. 1). In the past five years, particularly, the concept of blended learning has become widely accepted in both academic and corporate worlds: the term is now generally used to mean a structured process that involves a mix of teaching and learning activities, including e-learning, face-to-face instruction, and telephone contact (CILIP, 2008). Blended learning is viewed as having myriad possibilities for enhancing higher education instruction, primarily "because new ways of thinking about course design are required to reconcile traditional values and practices with evolving expectations and technological possibilities" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 3).

In a study by Orhan (2008) focused on blended learning and teaching, college students felt that: "the integration of face-to-face and online learning environments was more enjoyable than purely online distance learning or purely face-to-face environments" (p. 61). In Orhan's words:

Blended learning can improve students' responsibility for their own learning through online activities and improve their motivation through face-to-face interactivity. In blended learning environments, instructors may be able to spend less time delivering content and more time guiding students…when trying to implement a student-centered learning environment. (p. 64)

Orhan (2008), therefore, recommends that instructors should be (1) encouraged to forego strictly traditional lecturing in favor of courses designed to incorporate blended learning approaches, and (2) trained for the dual roles of both content developer and facilitator in courses redesigned for blended learning environments.

Based upon the view that the value of blended learning lies in identifying situations in which technology-enhanced learning experiences might prove more effective and efficient in supporting meaningful learning, the following success factors for blended e-learning described by CILIP (2008) are useful for instructors in designing effective *blended learning* courses:

- **work with and within the context** (blended e-learning is most effective when it is designed and developed within and for a specific context);
- **use blended learning as a driver for transformative course redesign** (the best results are obtained when blended learning is used as a driver for course redesign that includes analyzing the current course and obtaining feedback from stakeholders, especially students);
- **help students develop their own conceptions of the learning process** (students are more likely to engage in learning and teaching activities if they understand the rationale for it); and
- **disseminate and communicate results of findings** (the report authors highlight the importance of disseminating the findings from research about blended e-learning). (p. 3)

The mixture of blended learning can incorporate a variety of teaching and learning styles, course materials, and learning technologies, such as traditional classroom settings (including lecture theaters, and laboratory environments), CD-ROMs and DVDs, e-mails, course management systems, e-books, virtual learning environments (including message boards and chart rooms), asynchronous online delivery and tools such as Wikis and blogs, and synchronous online delivery and tools such as instant messaging (Gulc, 2006). The choice of a blend is best determined by the nature of the course and its learning objec-

tives, instructor experiences and teaching styles, and student needs. Blended learning is also concerned with effectively leveraging the strengths of differing kinds of learning activities and venues in achieving some overarching learning objectives (Howard, Remenyi, & Pap, 2006, p. 1). Insofar as the aim of blended learning is to meet the challenges of widely differing situations, the following characterization is intriguing:

Blended learning isn't really about assembling media or methods. It isn't design by numbers. What blended learning must do is to provide an integrated environment in which to learn. It must provide an experience that is more effective than the sum of its parts. In fact, blended learning is like so much that happens in our increasingly networked world: it's not the individual components that matter, but the way they relate. It's not the nodes in the network, but the way they link together. (LINE Communications, n. d., p. 1)

Blended learning *is* considered to be an effective *first* step toward implementing fully online learning. Even when it is the first step, "maximizing success in a blended learning initiative requires a planned and well-supported approach that includes a theory-based instructional model, high-quality faculty development, course development assistance, learner support, and ongoing formative and summative assessment" (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004, p. 3). This point deserves emphasis. The potential for new technologies to increase the quantity and timeliness of information from learning activities performed in different venues will be realized only if higher education instructors are motivated to use this information to improve the quality of teaching (Howard et al., 2006). That is why preparing faculty for blended and online learning is so important.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Blended learning, as previously discussed, has many *faces* (including combining instructional modalities or delivery media, and integrating instructional methods). In this publication, *Cases on Blended and Online Learning Technologies in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*, blended learning is generally understood as a balanced combination of traditional classroom-based activities with appropriately designed online learning experiences, or the convergence between traditional campus-based learning and online/distance learning.

Despite the growing interest in blended learning approaches, there are few published cases that provide specific insights into *how* blended learning courses should be designed, implemented, and evaluated in order to maximize teaching *effectiveness* and learning *quality*. The interest "in blended learning—thoughtful fusion of classroom and online learning experiences—has surged in the past two to three years throughout higher education. The need to provide more engaged learning experiences—and greater flexibility for students and faculty—are at the core of this interest" (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2008, p. 1).

Three guiding principles of the book are as follows:

- **Blended learning might be the solution**. It is a time to think about redesigning courses for blended learning, reconciling "traditional values and practices with evolving expectations and technological possibilities" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 3). In this regard, the cases in the book focus on the challenges and directions of redesigning courses, especially for student-directed learn-

ing, based upon a wide range of designs, methodologies, and applications of blended and online learning—thus from course design to assessment of learning outcomes.

- **Experience is the best teacher**, as the adage goes. This is especially true for the contributors of cases who are eager to discuss and share their real-life examples and experiences in order to make a positive impact on blended and online learning. Their examples and experiences can be applied to any other settings or institutions of higher education throughout the world.
- **Lifelong learning is an educational agenda**. Lifelong learning is one of the most important engines driving education in the 21st century (Magoulas, 2008). Providing cases of blended and online learning technologies and environments for different needs and settings, the book discusses the role today's higher education instructors and institutions can play as they become genuinely lifelong instructors and institutions, better helping students to survive in a technologically sophisticated society.

The aim of this book of cases is to contribute to an educational transformation based upon new models of teaching and learning, and made possible by "the confluence of *new* pedagogies (e.g., the change in emphasis from teaching-centered to student-centered learning paradigms), *new* technologies (e.g., the rapid spread of the Internet, World Wide Web, and personal computers), and *new* theories of learning (e.g., brain-based learning and social constructivism)" (Dziuban et al., 2004, p. 2). It is hoped that the book will be a valuable resource for both the *conceptual* understanding and *practical* application of blended and online learning technologies in higher education.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book of cases consists of 15 chapters. A brief description of each of the cases follows:

Chapter One, "The Nature of Complex Blends: Transformative Problem-Based Learning and Technology in Irish Higher Education," discusses the case of blending technology and problem-based learning (PBL) group interaction in the context of *academic staff development* with two objectives in mind: (1) to establish, in a PBL tutorial setting, the factors that govern the success of blended PBL; and (2) to identify technical, academic, and interactional indicators of learning in the online and face-to-face PBL tutorial. Qualitative data from focus group interviews, reflection papers, and participant observations emphasize the need for effective interaction between pedagogy and technology to ensure that both are used to best effect in implementing PBL in a blended learning environment. Thus pedagogy and technology must work effectively together.

Chapter Two, "Experiences and Perceptions of Learner Engagement in Blended Learning Environments: The Case of an Australian University," discusses the case of a collaboration by the faculty of business and education, presenting a detailed examination of *three postgraduate courses* in relation to design, development, and management of blended learning as it intersects with learner engagement. The authors make an attempt to extend current understandings of blended learning: what it is, in what contexts it occurs, how its effectiveness can be maximized, and what its connections with learner engagement are and should be. The authors realize that these ongoing challenges, including issues such as student retention and attrition, cannot necessarily be resolved easily or permanently because several factors influencing the challenges lie outside the control of individual course team members.

Chapter Three, "Instructional Leadership and Blended Learning: Confronting the Knowledge Gap in Practice," discusses an initiative taken by a professor in the educational leadership department to explore the concept of blended instruction in his own delivery of *a doctoral course.* This course was designed to engage participants, who were typically seeking endorsement (i.e., certification) at the school district

superintendent level, in examining the instructional leadership ramifications of the effective integration of digital technology and learning. Many challenges were exposed through the initiative discussed. It may be that the advantage of this approach from the disruptive innovation perspective was a disadvantage for those developing the program in that the very remoteness of the participants exacerbated the ill effects of the unexpected missteps encountered in developing the new program.

Chapter Four, "Blended Learning in a Creative Writing Program: Lessons Learned from a Two-Year Pilot Study," discusses the case of a two-year pilot study of blended learning in *an undergraduate creative writing program*. The authors express the strong need for a flexible learning approach offering a variety of formats in order to meet the needs of a diverse student body spread across the university's three campuses, and including older students with competing family and work commitments. Drawing from the evaluation data, the case details both the successes and problems encountered in the transition to a blended learning format, along with lessons learned along the way. The author concludes that although the entrenched inequities between distance and on-campus students are no longer necessary or conscionable, achieving parity will require reform at the institutional level as well.

Chapter Five, "Blended Learning for Adaptation to Needs," discusses the author's observation and experience with multiple blended approaches in *communication arts*, and emphasizes that blended learning is more than the old learning modes of correspondence and televised courses. The study describes the experiences of both state and private institutions using various levels of distance learning integration. The case information includes the type of technology used, the way blended learning has been configured in several contexts, and questions for the future applications of blended learning in undergraduate and graduate programs. The author believes that blended communication is a process of individuals' adapting to the Internet to increase their overall communication effectiveness.

Chapter Six, "Virtual Reality or Virtually Real: Blended Teaching and Learning in a Master's Level Research Methods Class," discusses implementing blended learning approaches in the case of *a master's level research methodology course*, which was intended to help students become critical professional consumers of research reports. The authors recognize that higher education instructors are now placed in a pivotal position and are required to take up the work of designing high-quality teaching and learning for students in order to meet standards set by governments, which include demands for increased use of technology. As the authors maintain, it may be that technology has become virtually transparent, so that people have moved from the "e" to the "learning," or, in other words, from thinking of pedagogy in terms of virtual reality to a student experience that is virtually real.

Chapter Seven, "Teaching Online: What Does Blended Learning Require," asks the following question in a study of blended learning for foreign/second language acquisition: How can the instructor increase input, and improve the comprehension of input, in a second-language classroom? Describing blended learning and teaching for *foreign/second language classes*, this case attempts to answer the above-stated question by showing simple ways to make currently incomprehensible input comprehended, and to increase input, with the benefit of a memory efficient approach developed from human parser learning theory (HPLT). The author justifies why input comprehension matters according to HPLT, and shows how simply the instructor can make audio files, for example.

Chapter Eight, "The Perfect Blend?: Online Blended Learning from a Linguistic Perspective," discusses the case of online degree courses offered by the communication sciences and economics faculty at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, where the author is currently a contracted professor in charge of two courses in *English language*. Since 2002, the University has offered blended e-learning courses for its distance learning programs that provide actual, physical links between teachers and students so as to ensure that the "human touch" is included. The study identifies the many challenges facing the University as it attempts to find the optimum blend of components, and also notes the problems posed by extraneous factors such as obsolete phone-line connections.

Chapter Nine, "Reflections —— Two Years after the Implementation of a Blended Educational Research Course," discusses a pilot study incorporating blended learning in *an introductory educational research course* at an American Pacific island university, and presents a detailed overview of how the instructor applied blending learning design to this particular course. The author compares her goals for the course with the concept of blended learning, and discusses reasons why the two complemented one another. Based on the instructor's observations, as well as the student self-ratings (quantitative data) and self-narratives (qualitative data), this case confirms the prediction drawn from the literature that pedagogical and technological difficulties present major challenges for blended course instruction. The need for future research to obtain additional empirical evidence about student achievements and outcomes is also noted.

Chapter Ten, "A Case of Using Wikis to Foster Collaborative Learning: Pedagogical Potential and Recommendations," discusses a Wikibook project involving graduate students teaching *adult education* in the American mid-South. Findings from this case challenge idealistic hypotheses that Wiki work, without careful design and implementation, is naturally beneficial. Although Wikis have increasingly been used for collaborative classroom writing and have been hailed as a learning/writing tool that is more powerful than blogs and e-mails, the pedagogical impacts of using Wikis is thus far underrepresented in the literature. It is the belief of the authors that the Wiki work presented in this case is consistent with is consistent with Fishman and Pea's statement about enhancing learner's networked learning and encourages learners to become self-directed lifelong learners through collaborative writing and public presentation of their work.

Chapter Eleven, "Virtual Organizing Professional Learning Communities through a Servant-Leader Model of Appreciative Coaching," presents the case of a set of empowerment concerns in the context of transforming classes of student and teacher learners, considered as department-wide learning units in higher education, into *professional learning communities* (PLCs). In particular, the author is interested in enhancing the student's experience by designing a collaborative and problem-based learning environment, which relies on the virtual organizing of the various PLCs distributed throughout the institution. Of specific interest to the author is the generative potential of the PLCs when nurtured by the practice of appreciative coaching, adapted from the established positive change paradigm of appreciative inquiry, through a servant-leader model of student-centered education.

Chapter Twelve, "Bothering with Technology: Building Community in an Honors Seminar," discusses the use of technology to enrich the learning experiences of students in a first year honors course in *critical reading and writing*, and examines the framework of Web-based learning. Noting that honors courses involve an especially concentrated curriculum, the author contends that instructors of honors courses, who might be predisposed to more traditional teaching methods, need to "bother" with technology in order to provide their students with the combination of learning strategies that are most efficient and effective. The highlight of this case is an extensive discussion of four strategies to build community through interaction and engagement. The case also provides the course syllabus and teaching materials.

Chapter Thirteen, "Online Materials for Teaching Japanese," examines the merits and demerits of learning the *Japanese language* through blended and online instruction, based upon the theory that technology-based learning methods affect the process of foreign language learning in terms of motivation, performance, and effectiveness. Hiragana practice software developed by the author was used in teaching Japanese. The author asserts that although new software has yet to show dramatic change in student learning, it clearly gives different stimuli to the student and is useful for the student's self study. Moreover, a blended learning course comprised of both face-to-face instruction and online learning is promising because learning a language requires both memorization and repeated exercise outside the classroom.

Chapter Fourteen, "Composition Goes Online: How a Small Pacific Island is Blogging into the Future," provides a historical background of the course development; insights from two instructors about the process of teaching this way for the University of Guam's diverse student population; and suggestions for future successes based on current challenges and issues. This was the first offering of *an online version of the English course* at the University. As emphasized in the chapter, the authors argue that students at the University are ready for more technology in their classroom environments, and the University should accommodate their requests in order to successfully prepare them for their careers.

Chapter Fifteen, "Integrating Classroom and Online Instruction in an Introductory American Government Course," compares two sections of *an introduction to American government course*. One section involved both lecture and online components, while the other was taught as a typical lecture course. The author designed the online components to provide course material that the students would otherwise have missed due to decreased lecture time, and also with the intention of improving the course. The author recognizes the opportunity to add a significant online course component as a chance to address the usual limitations of large, introductory sections. The author also believes hybrid online classes will most likely be adopted on a case by case basis, depending on the interest of the instructor.

The prospective audience thus includes professors, researchers, trainers, library media specialists, teachers, administrators, and educational technologists (who design instruction, produce instructional materials, and manage instructional computing services or learning resources collections) in academic communities particularly. This book will be helpful to all professionals who are enthusiastic about exploiting the potential of blended and online learning to maximize the teaching-learning process of higher education. The book can also serve as a library reference, faculty manual, course supplement, reading text, and resource for instructors.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the goal of this book is to appeal to all higher education stakeholders—especially students, faculty, and administrators—with a professional interest in blended and online learning technologies and environments. Anyone working with blended or online learners, or anyone engaged in such learning, will also find this book beneficial.

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