Chapter 6
The Transition From Teaching F2F to Online

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ABSTRACT

As online education continues to grow, more and more faculty find themselves transitioning from teaching face-to-face to online environments. Unsurprisingly, this can be challenging for many faculty as they go through this process. This book chapter examines the experience of a faculty member who transitioned from teaching exclusively face-to-face to online and lessons learned are shared. Additionally, four students share their experience learning online and provide recommendations to faculty members.

INTRODUCTION

The pathways to the professoriate within the academy can be as diverse as those who hold these positions. While some knew they wanted to be faculty early on in their academic and professional careers, not only was this not a desire for me, but in fact it never crossed my mind as a possibility. After completing my graduate degree in my respective discipline, I, like the majority of my classmates and colleagues, entered into my field as a practitioner. Over the next twelve years, my career progressed accordingly.
and I moved into senior university administrator positions. During the latter part of my administrative career, I recognized that moving from a senior to an executive leadership position would require a terminal degree. This epiphany led to my pursuit of a doctorate and (unknowingly) my ultimate career change into the professoriate.

While I worked toward my doctorate, it didn’t cross my mind that faculty life would be the path for me or the fact that it was even a possibility. Out of happenstance, I was asked to teach a graduate level course as an adjunct, which as it turned out would change my career path. This opportunity helped me to find my true passion and calling in my professional life – teaching. I loved teaching in the face-to-face (F2F) environment and actively sought out opportunities to continue to do so both as an adjunct and ultimately as a full-time faculty member. With my love for being in the classroom firmly established, I never would have imagined that I would willingly accept a faculty position where I would teach almost exclusively online. Not only did this happen, but even more to my surprise, I have found that I enjoy teaching online even more than in a F2F environment.

This chapter is an autoethnography of my teaching and experience transitioning from teaching solely F2F to exclusively online. Beyond sharing my experience, I will compare and contrast my Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) for these two formats. The inclusion of these teaching evaluations and student comments will help to illustrate the strategies, success, and challenges shared throughout the chapter. Furthermore, it would be remiss of me if this chapter only included my experience and not also the voices of my online students. To provide this student perspective, four of my former students have briefly written about their experiences learning online and provided a recommendation for future faculty teaching online.

BACKGROUND

Online education has continued to grow and play an increasingly important role in higher education. The enrollment of online learners has increased from 1.6 million students in 2002 to 6.7 million online students in 2012 (Allen & Seaman, 2013). These significant enrollment numbers have not gone unnoticed, as a recent study found almost two-thirds of college and university administrators perceived online education as critical to the institution’s long-term strategy and success (Allen & Seaman, 2016). While it was previously found that students preferred traditional face-to-face courses over online courses with regard to course quality, counter to this they continued to enroll in online courses at increasing rates (Weldy, 2018). As online education programs increase in both size and scope, it is important that educators continue to establish online learning environments that not only foster learning, but also promote positive experiences for students.

It has been noted that online courses have some distinctive features that set them apart from the traditional face-to-face classroom experience, such as a reliance on technology, differences in learner participation and content delivery, college affordability, student flexibility, and accessibility (Ascough, 2002; Deming, Goldin, Katz & Yuchtman, 2015; Kauffman, 2015; Nguyen, 2015). Many factors impact the quality of online education and the learning experience, which has been a long-standing topic for consideration (Twigg, 2001; Yang & Cornelious, 2004). Twigg (2001) made the distinction that “any discussion about quality in a distributed learning environment must first ask: From whose perspective are we considering quality?” (p. 1). Students may perceive differences in the quality of their traditional face-to-face courses in comparison to the quality of their online courses; similarly, students may also perceive the quality of their online courses differently than faculty members guiding the online courses.
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