

## HOW ONLINE TUTORIALS CAN ENHANCE THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE:

### A FORUM DISCUSSION

*Participants: Chris Andrews, Kimball Galbraith, Bruce Kusch, Robyn Bergstrom, moderated by Casey Hurley*

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Casey: What are you doing outside the classroom with technology so you can spend classroom time doing other things?

Bruce: One of the things I have done for team projects is to set up Blogs and Wikis on Blackboard. Students post to the Blog information that could be shared with other students. For example, a team doing research shares sources with other teams. Then the team members post their written work on the Wiki. I don't have them turn in paper; they just put it on the Wiki and I look at it there. On the Wiki, the other students on the team can edit, change, and improve the project. I have done it for the first time this semester and we're all getting used to it. So far, I really like it.

Casey: What do you like about doing this?

Bruce: I like the fact that I don't get inundated with paper. I like the fact that students can post to it. For example, tomorrow I'm not going to be in class because I am going to a conference, but I have given them an assignment and they're meeting. Amy Staiger will show them a video, and then they will meet in teams afterwards and post to the Blog. I can still have them doing things when I'm not there so I don't have to cancel class.

- Kimball: How do you figure out who the actual participants are versus the free-riders?
- Bruce: Blackboard has a grading tool.
- Kimball: How does it work?
- Bruce: When the student posts, the grading tool says “edited by” or “posted by” and the posting times. I guess it is possible that a student could log on and somebody else could do it for them, but it’s pretty secure. And they can post from anyplace they can get an internet connection. They can also upload files like a PowerPoint or an Excel spreadsheet. It’s not perfect, though.
- Robyn: I have also had my students use a Wiki this semester. They read online articles and wrote papers each week. Students were assigned to groups that read and edited each others’ papers. At the end of the semester, I have students select their best paper to turn in, and I randomly pick one of the others posted on the Wiki to grade. So though they write and edit eight papers, I only grade two.
- Casey: Have you used the Discussion Board?
- Robyn: I ask students to submit to the Discussion Board once a week. Through this medium I have students letting me know what they specifically understood and what they need clarified. They have all kinds of discussions, which I also participate in, or I can relate it to the class discussion later.
- Bruce: Can they comment on things other students have said?
- Robyn: Yes, they can create a new thread or they can comment on someone else’s.
- Casey: Do you give them credit for either one?
- Robyn: Yes. Some of them will comment three or four times, and I give them credit for only one.
- Kimball: Do you think it enhances learning?
- Robyn: Yes, because even if they are just reading what someone else writes, then their memory is jolted to something that went on in class. Also if concerns are raised, I can respond or adjust that in our next class or through e-mail.
- Casey: Have you been using Blackboard Collaboration?

Robyn: Students go on Blackboard and open the collaboration and everybody can talk at the same time. When the board is open for everyone, it's pretty crazy. I decided as a communication teacher I needed to see how it works. Last semester while I was in Boise attending a conference, I instructed my students not to come to class but to go to a computer. Some were in the library, some were home, and others were in their apartment lounges when they logged on. It worked well in some ways. Our conversation started on questions or theories, and someone went off on a different tangent. By the time you can respond, there are five other people who have said something. It needs to have some parameters. But I'm glad we gave it a try.

Casey: Would you ever use it again?

Robyn: Yes, with more controls, I would like to try it again. What may work is to have an office hour, and anyone could write in on a specific topic, or say, "I've got this problem. What could I do?" And then I can respond to it, or have other students help to answer the question. I have set up the groups so the students communicate in group discussion. This is in Blackboard under communication, in group pages. You can set up groups in Blackboard so they can communicate just with each other.

Chris: What percentage of your class is online rather than in class?

Robyn: It depends on the class. In my interpersonal communication class it is less than 10 percent. Yet in group dynamics we are even doing book reports on Blackboard where everyone could read them and post comments. Right now that course is approximately 25 percent online. It has made our class time that much more productive. I have also been using the Harvard Manage Mentor this semester. The students have done eight different modules.

Casey: What is the Harvard Manage Mentor?

Bruce: The Harvard Manage Mentor has all different categories you can pick from. It works the students through short scenarios and gives them content, and there are links to online articles they can read. I am going to use three of them in my strategy class, which will eliminate five chapters out of the custom textbook I used to use, and they can go back and refer to it

again and again. I've not done it before, so we don't know how well it works.

Casey: Are you creating any of your own online content?

Kimball: I have students watch videos clips that I created using Camtasia software. The software will create a video recording of everything you see on the computer screen. Once Camtasia begins recording, everything on the computer screen is recorded and later displayed on a timeline. The software will capture both audio narration and computer screen footage. Before the video clip is actually created, you can delete or modify any narration mistakes and then have Camtasia create the video clip. The power behind the software is that with very little training you can create your own video clips that can then be viewed by students.

In my classes, students have indicated that the video clips have assisted them in acquiring new knowledge and developing additional skills. Students like the video clips because they watch them outside of class and have the ability to replay them as needed. For project-based assignments, students use these home-grown video clips to assist them in completing challenging assignments.

Casey: What are the drawbacks?

Kimball: The software is not always robust and can occasionally have problems. The biggest drawback is that the files are large and can eat up a lot of drive space.

Chris: Videos I make with Camtasia have no problems because I'm not a power user. I make videos that average ten minutes in length. Kimball has one that is ten hours long. When he says he doesn't like it, it's because the length of his video is blowing the system up.

Casey: What sort of technology would be ideal?

Kimball: I would love software that doesn't just capture the screen but also allows you to set up a camera for recording. Camtasia won't allow you to do that sort of thing very easily.

Casey: Tell us how Camtasia works with PowerPoint.

Bruce: Well, it works the same way. You press the "record" button and the presentation comes up in slide-show mode. It captures your keystrokes and you can push the advance button to move

a slide when you need to. You have the slide up and you are explaining what is on it. You can tell the students, “Tomorrow we are doing B, but tonight you have to review A because we will not spend time tomorrow talking about A again.” A is self-explanatory enough that I will start out tomorrow’s class by saying, “Do you have any questions about what you reviewed? If you don’t have specific questions, then we will move on.” This saves me and the students class time.

Casey: What are you using the saved class time for?

Bruce: I did an introductory PowerPoint on the case method for the students to view before class. Instead of taking a class period to explain the case method, we spend the class on a case, a very simple case. I do a review of the method, and then we actually get into a little case. Previously, I was taking a whole class period to just go through the PowerPoint presentation and then ending up with ten minutes to discuss the case. This way we take ten minutes on the PowerPoint and have the rest of the time for the case.

Chris: We’ve migrated from the original model: “Go read this \$110 textbook and then come to class and listen to me read the PowerPoint slides to you.” With some of the higher-level classes Kimball is teaching, it’s helpful if students get a foundation in Excel. We started by trying to model Excel in class for 95 students of the IBC (Integrated Business Core), and it was anarchy. It was unmanageable. You spend the time and then the students don’t have it; they all ask the same questions that were just answered.

It was clear to me that we needed a hands-on way to learn Excel. The library computer lab had only 30 seats for my section of 95 students. Then Kimball showed me Camtasia. I made a video of myself demonstrating something in Excel and put it on the server. In one semester of experimentation, I had it working. The students created Excel models and turned them in for me to grade. The models were great and the students loved doing them. They said it worked really well because they could go through them at their own speed. A student who already knew Excel didn’t even bother to watch the clip, but another student watched it five times. Now, instead of four Excel models, I have 25 to go with the course. The 25 models cover the basics, each about ten minutes long. They should prepare students for the next finance course. We don’t

burn any class time on it, so it has freed up more than three hours of class time. Today, for the first time all semester, I talked about one of our Excel models for a couple of minutes. Everyone in the class knew what it was about, already having watched it and created one like it.

Casey: Could these ideas be used in non-quantitative courses like marketing or communication?

Bruce: I'm teaching a two-credit global marketing course that used to be three credits. It frustrates me because students feel like I'm shoving three credits of work into a two-credit format.

I don't want to lecture. This is a 400-level marketing class, and they should be beyond product, price, promotion, and place. I don't even talk about those things. They have a project to do, and I wondered whether the whole course should be focused on the project. I've tried that, where the course is essentially the project. I told the students they would have the majority of the time to work on the project and I would be there on certain days to answer questions. Nobody ever showed up.

I completely changed the syllabus this semester to identify the concepts and principles. Almost everything I teach is principle-based. Strategy is principle-based; marketing is principle-based. I want these students to understand principles they can apply in a business environment. This semester I picked ten topics and cases to go with each one.

Casey: Could you use class time more efficiently by having your students watch some of your lectures before coming to class?

Bruce: I've been thinking maybe I could do something with Camtasia, some topics I could explain. Maybe I could do ten lectures on the ten topics. Then I would know they were done the way I want them. I could key the lectures to the cases so students would know what and how to prepare before coming in to do the case.

Casey: Has this type of approach been effective in other courses?

Chris: I will describe one class I am restructuring. Business 301 is supposed to be an introduction to finance, but for a lot of our business majors it is the only finance class they take. It is a content class, but it also has some orientation for application. More of the application comes in the higher-level classes, 401,

410, and 411; so 301 is intended to help students develop some tools and understand some basic content.

Maybe I'm going overboard on this class, but Module One is a review of accounting. If you don't review it, they're dysfunctional and can't deal with anything going forward. I've decided this semester to put Module One online, with the exception of the case. Students will have to do it in the first two days of the semester and pass the first exam on Blackboard.

For the rest, I'm making everything available online. The text is online now through eBrary and it's free. It is generic stuff; I don't want them to buy a \$120 book. The text is online and the lectures are online. There are Excel financial models they have to build, and all those are modeled online as well. The assignments are online, the videos of how to do assignments are online, and the exam is online. I'm just saying, "You have until this date to have it all done, and then we will do cases in class that are content-oriented." I can gauge then whether they're grasping the subject. They work in teams to develop solutions and turn them in online, and my assistant grades them.

Casey: The first module is done in two days?

Chris: If I had my way I would have it done before they even show up for the first day of class, but on the first day I'll show them where to find it and tell them they've got two days to get it done and to take the exam. Right now it's taking me five class meetings to get through it.

One hundred percent of the materials are on Blackboard, and all the grading is there. I don't see a single piece of paper. What I'm trying to do with this class is remove all of the grind—the readings and the lectures. I'm trying to move that all onto their own desk so that they're responsible for it. Then when they come to class we will clarify concepts and work on worksheets and cases. What I'm trying to do is shift a substantial portion of the discussion to application-oriented activities, like a case that involves more application. I'm kind of nervous about it because it's almost like I've taken what used to be my class and put it all online. Now what we do during class is stuff we never considered doing before.

Casey: So as the teacher you become more of a consultant?

Chris: Yes. That's a good word to use. I see myself more as someone who is there to clarify, coach, and then say, "Ok, how do you use this stuff?"

Kimball: A lot of my classes are like that. Actually, Chris and I are in areas that are fairly quantitative and our class sizes are often quite large. On many of the really tough computer-based financial assignments I have students push as far as they can outside of class. Then when they come to class, the class time is structured like a computer lab. Often as students build models and solve problems they get stuck. At some point when several students hit a roadblock I'll say, "What principle do I need to clarify in order for you to proceed?" I won't show them how to do the problem, but I do discuss the financial principle that will help them solve it on their own.

If after reviewing the principle a student still says she can't figure out how to proceed, I'll say, "I'm counting on you to get this problem solved. If you are still struggling with this, you've got 50 other people in the room; start mingling with other students." Out of necessity, students then begin working together. Once students begin teaching students, the power of peer-to-peer teaching comes through. As each assignment is completed, students feel a great sense of accomplishment because they've completed something they thought they couldn't do. I think this approach provides great training for the business world.

Chris: One thing that intrigues me about these lessons is that they are portable and modular. For example, if I teach Business 401 again, I can take a review module from my Business 301 class. I could probably borrow some of Kimball's modules when we talk about Chapter 6, because I can never remember how to build that model that involves multiple assets allocation. I can say, "Watch Brother Galbraith's video, and here's the model you have to produce." You can assemble pieces from here and there. In a strategy class you could say, "As a refresher, here's a module from Business 301 that you might want to review." At some point you would have a bank of these things to draw from at any time. ☺