Learner Support in Online Learning

Dr. Marti Cleveland-Innes
Marguerite Koole
Centre for Distance Education
Athabasca University

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Introduction and warm-up – *getting ready to workshop*

Supporting the move online – *demographics, models and ideas from the experts*

Identifying guiding principles – *laying the foundation for student support*

Technical solutions – *one example of flexible, convenient, anytime support*

How do we get there – *ideas about the move to collaborative online support*

Getting ready – *generating an action plan to move support online*
Warm up Exercise
(15 minutes)

- Review photographs presented around the room
- Choose an image that represents ‘the state of student support for online learners’ at your institution
- Find a group of 3-4 people
- Introduce yourself, present the image and explain why you chose the image you did
We are dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level studies and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide.
Guess who is coming to college .....
Service model
Online identity

The "anonymity" of posting words to a screen, as opposed to speaking out in front of people makes me much more likely to say what I really think. Since I’ve never met any of the students personally, and probably never will, I can “be the real me” with minimal fear of repercussion. If I make a mistake, fail to grasp a concept, or decide to take a stand on an issue, I can do so, secure in the knowledge that I can remain anonymous. (#166)
Online identity

I personally felt that a little more input and guidance from the instructor might have removed some anxiety and stimulated some interaction on my part. (#197)

I feel that I don’t have as much to offer as others, either because I have had a more limited scope of learning or life experiences or because I can be intimidated by huge thoughts from bright people. (#250)
Role adjustment

- Changing role of instructor and minimal instructor presence
- Using the technology
- Internet understanding
- E-mail protocol
- Self presentation communicating online (presence)
- Increased interaction with peers
- Knowing how to participate as a group member
Critical considerations

- Learner readiness for online learning (independence, language proficiency, technology skills and equipment)

- Balance being available with not being intrusive (pull versus push)

- Ensure learners know what they can and can’t expect online

- Provide transparent processes for accessing help when needed

- Create the opportunity for community online
Exercise #2

Identifying Underlying Principles

- Reflection of key principles you see
- Sharing and massaging reflections
- Identifying key principles that should underlie student service in online environments
Student Support Technology

At Athabasca University

Madison, Wisconsin
August 3, 2005
Preview

- About AU
- Open university
- Who are our students?
- Delivery modes
- Support services
- Tools of the trade
- Online communities
University history

- 1970 – Planning for a traditional classroom based institution
- 1972-1975 – Pilot project with 650 students
- 1977 – First convocation (2 students)
- 1978 – Permanent, self-governing status
- 1984 – Moved to Athabasca
Map

- Western Canada
Map - Athabasca

- 160 km (100 miles) north of Edmonton
- Town - 2300 people
- Surrounding area - 10,000 people
- No students on campus
Mission

Athabasca University, Canada’s Open University, is dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level studies and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide.

We are committed to excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, and to being of service to the general public.
Open university

- Time
- Location
- Past Experience
- Level of income
- Accessibility
- Flexibility
- Transfer
Statistics

- Students: 30,000
- Growth over 5 years: 51%
- Registrations since 1970: 200,000+
- Staff: 1,028
### Demographics

#### Undergraduate
- **Age:**
  - Under 25: 44%
  - 25 to 34: 34%
  - 35 to 44: 16%
  - 45+: 6%

- **Gender:**
  - Female: 66%

#### Graduate
- **Age:**
  - Under 25: 1%
  - 25 to 34: 27%
  - 35 to 44: 43%
  - 45+: 29%

- **Gender:**
  - Female: 54%
### Demographics

#### Undergraduate

- **Geographic Origin**
  - Alberta: 41%
  - Ontario: 28%
  - BC: 10%
  - Saskatchewan: 5%
  - Rest of Canada: 13%
  - International: 3%

#### Graduate

- **Geographic Origin**
  - Alberta: 25%
  - Ontario: 41%
  - BC: 13%
  - Saskatchewan: 3%
  - Rest of Canada: 13%
  - International: 5%
Types of students

- Working
- Studying full-time
- Visiting from other institutions
- Raising a family
- Travelling
- Lifelong learning
- Enhancing credentials
- Living remotely
- Students with disabilities
Delivery modes

- Individualized Study
  - Learning system package
    - Textbooks
    - Workbooks
    - Audio/video
    - Manuals
    - Computing resources
  - 6 month contract
  - Self-paced
Delivery modes

- Individualized Study Online
  - Require computer and Internet
    - Computer Science
    - Psychology
    - Communications Studies
Delivery modes

- Grouped Study
  - Classroom study at collaborating institutions
  - Enrolment: January & September
  - Some web-based, online study
Student support

- Registration Services
- Information Centre
- Computing Services
- Counseling & Advising
- Access for Students with Disabilities
- Prior Learning Accreditation
- Transfer credit
  - 280 participating institutions
Current technologies

- Mail
- Telephone
- Email
- Online services
  - Registration services
  - MyAU
## Future of e-Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today</th>
<th>Tomorrow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent patchwork</td>
<td>Networked learning infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietary</td>
<td>Open Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnected</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Yourself</td>
<td>Delivered to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure it out</td>
<td>Let me help you decide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Guess</td>
<td>Best Decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online tools

- Websites
- Gateways
- Intranets
- Portals – dynamic information
- Thick & thin
Portals

“...a secure, single point of interaction with diverse information, business processes and people personalized to a user’s needs and responsibilities” (IBM, 2003).

“The very intent of a portal is to simplify access” (Thomas, 2003, p. 115).
Portal characteristics

- Web-based aggregation point - a single point of entry to information and tools
- Meeting place (voice and video over IP, chat, discussion boards)
- A place for the co-creation of new knowledge
- Single sign-on
Why portals?

- Reduce information overload
- Reduce “batch communications”
- Reduce expense of traditional communications
Conditions of satisfaction

- Easy - access, navigation, reduced bureaucracy
- Accessible from anywhere, anytime
- Customizable
- Fast access to key knowledge and tools
- “All I need to do I can do through here”
Principles for killer app design

- Decision-making passes to learners.

- Shift management emphasis from groups of learners to individuals.

- Build knowledge or learning communities – bonding & relationships. Community centre and hub for interaction.

- Reduce registration and tracking to a bare minimum and focus more on providing extremely easy access to high-value content.

(Rosenberg, 2001, p. 256-258)
Online communities

- News
- Calendars
  - Individual
  - Group
  - Organizational
- Sticky features
  - Search
  - Dictionaries
- Courses

- Bookmarks
- Resources
  - Library
- Communication tools
  - Email
  - Instant messaging
  - Discussion forums
Online communities

- Specialized postings
  - Classified
  - Jobs
  - Résumés
  - Travel
- Feedback
  - Forms
  - Polling
  - Learning support systems
    - Study groups
    - Tutoring services
- Transactions
  - Conference registration
  - Course registration
  - Memberships registration
  - Financial transactions
- Workflow
  - Project management tools
  - Drop boxes, file sharing
- Access Devices
  - Wireless “push” technology
Conclusion

“We believe that the value of a portal to a campus is that it can be used to engage constituent groups, empower them with access to information resources and communication tools, and ultimately retain them by providing a more encompassing sense of membership in an academic community.”

(Institutional Portals, p. 11, 2003)
References


The Organizational Transition Process

What are our shared values?
What are our shared principles of practice?
What are our policies?

- Regarding IT, Internet and E-mail
- Codes of student conduct
- For legal protection
- On learning, student development and technology
- Who writes and monitors them
What is our staffing?

- Descriptions for student affairs technologists, IT developers and designers
- Protocols for training
- Requirements related to student user training
- Levels for support – current and required
Who provides technology?

- Reviews and describes currently available hardware and software
- Reviews and describes current hardware and software in use on campuses - what is really in use
- Reviews and descriptions of emerging hardware and software - what will become available for use
- Reviews out-of-date technologies that should be updated or replaced
- Individuals who can act as consultants in this area
What guides practice?

- Standard practices in student affairs for using IT, Internet and E-mail
- Best practices in student affairs for using IT, Internet and E-mail
- Emerging practices in student affairs for using IT, Internet and E-mail
- Material on relating practice to theory and to research
- Individuals who can act as consultants in this area
Exercise #3
Planning for Online Student Support

- Choose group to discuss action items
- Get ready to create and then present
- Identify action activities to move your institution, with underlying principles in place, to new places in terms of online student support
- Create presentation to group (3 minute presentation)
Required Supports

- Carefully designed web pages
- Monitor, enhance, improve for smooth administrative operations
- Help desk access
- Reliable networks
- Asynchronous access “24/7”
- Synchronous access at clearly identified times
- Quick response times
Required Supports

- Study skills support
- Virtual education/career counseling
- Virtual program advising
- Library support at a distance
- Ongoing learner satisfaction assessment
Recommended resources


Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications
http://www.wcet.info/projects/laap/guidelines/overview.asp#should
THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK