

Hybrid I: UW System Hybrid Course Project – Overview, Faculty Development, Student Resources

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Supported by a grant from the University of Wisconsin (UW) System, the Hybrid Course Project identified three goals: 1) develop Web resources on the Hybrid course model for teaching Hybrid courses; 2) create a model faculty development program for designing, developing and teaching Hybrid courses; and, 3) help seventeen instructors transform traditional courses into Hybrid courses. This presentation reports on the activities and the "lessons learned" during the project, which was active from January 2000 through June 2001. The Project Website Resources, including all materials developed for the faculty development process, are listed at the end of this paper.

Hybrid Course Model

"Hybrid" is the name commonly used to describe courses that have moved a significant part of course learning online, making it possible to reduce the amount of classroom seat time. Hybrid courses are also called "blended" and "mixed mode" courses.

The goal of Hybrid courses is to join the best features of in-class teaching with the best features of online learning to promote active independent learning and to reduce class seat time. Using computer-based technologies, Hybrid courses permit instructors to redesign some lecture or lab content into case studies, tutorials, self-testing exercises, simulations, group collaborations, and other online learning activities.

The University of Wisconsin System project funded seventeen instructors from a four-year research university (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and 2-year colleges (UW-Rock County, Sheboygan, Washington, and Waukesha) to redesign their courses into Hybrid courses. The project coordinators planned the work during spring 2000, worked with faculty during the course development process in summer and fall 2000, and the instructors delivered the new Hybrid courses in spring 2001. The participating instructors represented disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and professions. They adopted different approaches to the Hybrid model, based upon their instructional styles, their course content, and their course goals.

For example, a Communication instructor moved all lectures and many class activities online and met with students solely for the performance aspects of the course. Another instructor reduced the class time in a writing course by asking students to post their essays to discussion forums and employing peer critiquing in order to provide more time for the service learning component of the course. Another simply used the Hybrid model to cut a non-productive half hour off of a ninety-minute evening course.

All instructors were positive about their experience with the Hybrid model and plan to use it again. Most significantly for the project's goals, all instructors adopted a more student-centered, active learning approach in their Hybrid course that they plan to use in their traditional and Hybrid courses in the future. All agreed that developing the Hybrid course had been significantly more time-consuming than developing a traditional course, primarily because of time necessary to learn various online skills, such as

the Blackboard courseware or how to facilitate discussion forums. But they would all do it again. Here are some responses from participating instructors about their reactions to teaching a Hybrid course:

- "My students have done better than I've ever seen; they are motivated, enthused, and doing their best work." (English instructor)
- "I sense a heightened level of enthusiasm in my students." (Sociology instructor)
- "Positive for me and positive for the students." (Art History instructor)
- "Introverts, who are quiet in the face-to-face class, really participate online." (Educational Psychology instructor)
- "I was tired of hearing myself talk. This gets so much more student interaction." (Communication instructor)
- "The Hybrid allowed me to do things in my course that I've always wanted to do and couldn't." (Archaeology instructor)

Major Lesson Learned: The Hybrid course model is flexible. It accommodates courses of different disciplines, different class sizes, different instructor teaching styles and student learning styles, and different percentage reductions of in-class seat-time. One size does NOT fit all!

Faculty Development Model Created for the UW Hybrid Project

As class seat time is reduced and a significant part of learning is online, moving to the Hybrid model requires an extensive course redesign. Faculty must reexamine their course goals and objectives, design online learning activities to meet those goals and objectives, and effectively integrate the online activities with the face-to-face meetings. In order to help faculty with this process, the project team structured a faculty development program to provide instructors with the background and guidance necessary to design, develop, and teach effective Hybrid courses.

It is important for faculty who are going to teach Hybrid courses to experience Hybrid courses as students do. Therefore, the Hybrid faculty development program is essentially a Hybrid course involving online materials, independent learning activities, online discussion, and face-to-face meetings and activities. This format not only gives faculty experience in learning in the Hybrid environment, but it also encourages good Hybrid course practices.

Posted on the website of the Hybrid Course Project (see below, "Project Website Resources") is a summary of the faculty development process used with the seventeen faculty participants. The site includes not only a step-by-step summary of activities, but it also contains copies of the actual assignments and learning activities and links to the work produced by the faculty participants.

After teaching their first Hybrid courses, the participants were surveyed and asked to evaluate the extent to which the faculty development process prepared them to design, develop, and teach a Hybrid course. Based upon their responses and a self-reflection by the project team, a revised and enhanced faculty development program for teaching Hybrid courses was constructed.

Here are some responses from participating instructors to the question, "If you could give only one piece of advice to someone who is just getting started with a Hybrid course design, what would that advice be?"

- "Start modestly. I got really carried away with what I wanted to do and I had to cut a lot out." (English instructor)
- "Keep it simple." (Business and English instructors)

- "Don't just replicate the textbook or your lectures onto the computer screen." (Psychology instructor)
- "Don't make the technology too challenging." (English instructor)
- "Figure out good ways to integrate the online learning activities with the face-to-face classes." (Business instructor)

Major Lesson Learned: Faculty value interacting with each other as they work through the process of redesigning their courses, and they especially value the opportunity to talk with faculty who already have experience teaching Hybrid courses.

Resources Developed for Students Enrolling in Hybrid Courses

To assist the students enrolled or considering enrolling in a Hybrid course, the project team developed a website to help students understand the course model, find campus support services, and assess their own preparedness to take a partially online course. The website begins with the key question: "Should I take a Hybrid Course? 'Hybrid' courses aren't for everyone! This site will help you decide if enrolling in a Hybrid course is for you."

Some students initially have trouble adjusting to the Hybrid model of learning. They need lots of information and an orientation to this new style of learning. The students' time-management skills are especially important in Hybrid courses. One of the most common comments from the participating instructors was describing problems with students not taking responsibility for their courses and lacking time-management skills.

Technology skills and access to fast modem connections were concerns for some students. All of the participating instructors agreed that the first week of class should be dedicated to technology issues and to socialization. A number of the instructors observed that some students dropped the Hybrid course because of their fear of the technology and/or their perception that the course would be more work than a traditional course. But all of the instructors also agreed that if the students got past the first two or three weeks, they could successfully manage the differences encountered in a Hybrid class.

Students reported high levels of satisfaction with the Hybrid courses. Their most frequent comment (by far) was that they liked the convenience and the freedom to work at their own pace. The following are selected questions from surveys administered to students in Hybrid courses at the end of spring semester 2001:

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	No opinion
I could control the pace of my own learning. (n=282)	69%	19%	12%
I could organize my time better. (n=282)	77%	11%	12%
The time I spent online would better have been spent in class. (n=282)	16%	67%	17%
There should be more courses like this. (n=282)	61%	16%	23%

Major Lesson Learned: Students do not understand what a Hybrid course entails. They see the online work as "homework" even if it is time they would have previously spent in class in a traditional course; students do not count time in class as "work", but they definitely perceive time online as work! The instructor should explain the course's Hybrid structure to them several times and in different ways.

Project Website Resources

University of Wisconsin System Hybrid Course Project website:

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/LTC/hybrid.html>

Faculty Development Model for Hybrid Project website (including the schedule and copies of all the materials we used): <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/LTC/fac-dev.html>

Hybrid Courses at UWM ~ Information for Students website:
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/LTC/hybridcourses.html>

Biographical Sketches

Robert Kaleta is director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Learning Technology Center, the campus faculty development center for instructional technology. This Center focuses on assisting mainstream faculty with their efforts to integrate technology into their courses.

He received his PhD from the University of Texas and has presented papers recently on the Hybrid course model, working with mainstream faculty, and using technology for teaching. As an instructional designer, he has assisted a number of faculty with their efforts to integrate technology into their teaching. As an instructor of university psychology courses, he has extensive personal experience using technology for teaching.

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Carla Garnham is an Instructional Innovator in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's (UWM) Learning Technology Center. As the Project Coordinator for the UW System Hybrid Course Project, she has worked closely with the participating instructors. She is also the primary author and coordinator for UWM's submission to the Pew Charitable Trusts Course Redesign Project, which was one of the 20 finalists in 2000-01 Round III competition. Carla received her M.A. from the University of Minnesota and B.A. from Cornell University. She has a thirty-year career in higher education including positions as statistical software consultant, university instructor, and CIO.

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