

## Transcription of Interview

Dr. Rosemary Lehman of Instructional Communications Systems, University of Wisconsin-Extension interviews Wayne Pferdehirt, Director of University of Wisconsin-Madison Master of Engineering in Professional Practice, Department of Engineering Professional Development.

This interview was held at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning on August 15, 2003 and was part of the New Directions Forum: Blending Asynchronous and Synchronous Formats.

**Rosemary: Since the focus today was on blending technologies for teaching and learning, I'd like to begin by asking your definition of "blending."**

Wayne: It's looking at different instructional technologies that are not traditionally paired and integrated and using them in creative ways. It's always getting back to what are we trying to achieve in this learning situation and how can I and how can our team creatively use different technologies to accomplish that end? So sometimes it's using say asynchronous and synchronous formats. I think that's one of the key blendings that happens. It can also be using traditional say web-based course formats with things like videoconferencing, audioconferencing, webconferencing. So to me it's, I guess it's an approach to learning design, to instructional design, of saying what are the various technologies we have and how can we get outside of our traditional boxes to combine them for collective maximum impact?

**Rosemary: Now I'd like to know how you actually use blending in your work and – if you can, give us a few examples?**

Wayne: The way that we use blending in the Engineering Degree Programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are to—we have all of our courses use a web-based asynchronous tool – currently that's WebCT soon to become transitioned to Desire2Learn. We supplement that within each of our courses with the weekly webconferences. Those sessions are held at times convenient to the students. So as part of each week's learning there's an asynchronous learning that's happening at the web site, there's a synchronous webconference. That is supplemented then with other materials that are distributed through CDs that students will listen to. And the webconferencing is also used for a tool for students to get together to work on projects together. So it's not just what the whole class is doing, but we're making these tools available to the students to use to get together in subgroups, to work on projects together, since so much of the learning is cooperative learning and doing projects together. Then the other part of that isn't a technical solution, but is another format that's combined, is our annual residency where students get together face-to-face. So we find that one week face-to-face, the web-based courses, and the webconferencing all supplement each other in terms of the nature of the interaction.

**Rosemary: So, once you've made your decisions, designed your program or course, and implemented it, how do you know that it's been successful – how do you measure and evaluate it?**

Wayne: Our evaluation program has several key components. First of all, each of the courses has at least an end of the course evaluation. Most of them also include mid-course evaluations, so we have online evaluations that the students do anonymously and they give very good feedback to the instructor, the instructional designer, and the MES Program Director. And then at the end of each course the three of us, the instructor, the instructional designer and I will sit down and review what the students have told us and we identify changes we want to make for the next cycle. In addition to that, when students graduate they complete an overall program evaluation, where they give us feedback on the overall program design – what they would change if they could about the curriculum or any other aspects of the program. So we have that feedback. And then, the third part is that nine to 12 months after the students graduate, we do an evaluation, what we call a program impact evaluation, where they tell us what difference the program has made in their career and their on-the-job performance. They also ask peers at work to complete an evaluation that similarly reflects on their changes in performance over the last two years at work. And there's an evaluation that family members fill out to tell us a little bit about what's happened to this person personally in terms of their development. So, it's all three of those that give us feedback as to how we can improve the program.

**Rosemary: As we wrap up – do you have a final comment on blending technologies?**

Wayne: I think the only additional comment I'd make is that, it's really important to as I say, just think creatively. I think a lot of times we use a certain set of technologies because that's what we've been handed. And, just like any technology, I think we have to not let the technologist dictate how the learning happens, but we need to know enough about what the options are out there and how they can be used individually and collectively for maximum impact. And so I think that's what we're really always challenged with, in the program, is staying on top of what the options are and how they can be creatively combined so that the technology is not driving the design.