GATEWAY SEMINARY

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A Faculty-Centered Model of Instructional Design for an Age of Blended Delivery Systems

Abstract
Gateway's recent relocation has created an innovative learning environment which blurs the boundary between on-campus and online instruction. The technology available in our classrooms now makes "remote participation" (students attending a live course through video conferencing) viable. Gateway faculty now face the challenge of offering courses not only in a variety of formats (online, hybrid, intensive, etc.), but also single classes which incorporate instruction to both on-campus and distance education students at the same time. Addressing both content delivery and student formation in such a blended, multifaceted learning environment presents new and unique challenges.

This proposal aims to establish a new model of instructional design that will establish best practices for blended delivery systems and train faculty to wield these practices in every course they teach. By applying the best practices across delivery systems, the faculty at Gateway Seminary will not only be able to deliver content, but also address the challenge of building meaningful, transformative relationships with students.

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Introduction

Gateway Seminary has recently completed a monumental transformation. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has moved its main campus from the San Francisco Bay to the Inland Empire of Southern California and changed its name to Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. Enrollment continues to be strong as Gateway strives to provide innovative delivery systems for all students. This innovation is partly contributed to the extensive technological capabilities of our new facility and partly contributed to the dedication and willingness of our faculty to reach students wherever they may be located. Extension campuses, commuter students, online courses, remote access courses (students attend live on-campus courses through video conference software), flipped classrooms, hybrid courses, and traditional courses are all common for the faculty of Gateway Seminary.

This innovative direction has brought with it a need to help faculty prepare online or blended curriculum and teach from proven instructional methodologies. Gateway's existing structure for instructional design provided support only for online instructors by giving them a "master course" to use. This approach, however, was not equipping faculty to build their own curriculum nor was it teaching them how to use different methodologies appropriately across all of the innovative delivery systems that are offered at Gateway.

In an effort to make a shift in our instructional design strategy, the ATS Innovation Grant enabled Gateway to design and implement a new way to equip instructors technologically and pedagogically to apply best practices across all delivery systems. Through the achievement of the below five goals, a faculty-centered model for instructional design was implemented.

Achievement of Goals

Goal 1: Create Standards and Expectations for Digital Instruction and Content Design

As a first step towards equipping faculty in instructional design, we needed to determine a minimum level of quality for digital instruction and content design regardless of delivery system. After research (see Bibliography) was conducted by a small team of faculty, the online office, and IT, a document called "Best Practices for Blended Learning" was created and distributed to the faculty. At the annual faculty retreat, the Director of Online Education explained the document and led a discussion to allow for revisions before adoption.

Once the document was revised, faculty were given various levels of opportunity to further their understanding of the instructional design principles and strategies outlined in the document (see Goal 2). Further, thanks to the Innovation Grant, faculty were equipped with the technology necessary to achieve a higher quality of digital content to abide by the best practice document (see Goal 3). Students and faculty both provided insight on the effectiveness of this new content with questions that reflected the best practice intentions. Finally, the faculty as a whole revised the document in March after having implementing the practices throughout the academic year (see Appendix 1 for most recent version).

Goal 2: Create a three-level training model for faculty and adjuncts of Gateway Seminary

It is no surprise that achieving best practices in varied delivery systems will take time. As faculty begin to become familiar with the technology and implement the pedagogical principles, they increase in their effectiveness as they learn how to teach through these innovative methods. Therefore, this goal intended to provide a support structure to prepare and equip instructors at every skill/knowledge level so that they are able to meet the quality standards in the best practice document. This resulted in a three-level development strategy.

Level 1 intended to equip first time online teachers with the basic principles for teaching online. The Director of Online Education met (either in person or over the phone) with each new instructor to discuss the process and principles. The instructor was given help with the LMS, video creation tools, PowerPoint/Keynote templates, and access to the Faculty Center where the best practices were displayed and explained. After the first semester, the Director of Online Education met with each new instructor about the course. This first level established an early expectation that online instructors at Gateway will strive to meet these best practices and are equipped to do so.

Level 2 intended to support all faculty with training on pedagogy and technology for varied delivery systems. The assumption was that each delivery system would require a different pedagogical approach, but overlapping pedagogical ideas and skills common to many delivery systems would enable all instructors to choose how to best craft their approach for each delivery system. The Faculty Center was revised to include support on the best practices adopted by the faculty and made available to all faculty (previously only available to online instructors). All faculty attended a workshop in September which equipped them to use video creation technologies and a webinar in February led by their peers regarding a pedagogical aspect of the best practices.

Level 3 intended to develop some faculty more extensively so that they would in turn be able to offer support to the rest of the faculty. We originally offered eight seats for the Online Learning Consortium's online teaching certificate (some for the fundamental course and some for the advanced certificate), but the response from the faculty was so positive that we adjusted the budget to open up two more seats. This opportunity provided these ten faculty to hear from online education experts about best practices for online education and received feedback on their own online course plans. These faculty provided collaborative feedback on pedagogy related to all delivery systems and prompted additional topics to be added to the Faculty Center. Four of those ten faculty were then selected to present at the February Peer-Led Webinar. They presented on topics related to the best practices that they learned in the training.

Goal 3: *Equip Faculty and Adjuncts with Tools and Resources for Creating High-Quality Digital Content*

The original proposal for the grant project included video creation software and hardware for all faculty at Gateway. After collaboration with IT, it became clear that a video recording studio plus the software and hardware would serve faculty along a range of technological skills. The budget was adjusted to provide equipment for the recording studio while still maintaining the quality hardware and software needed for creating digital content according to the best practices.

During the faculty retreat in August as well as the faculty forum in September, faculty were trained on how to use the software and hardware provided to them. Gateway's videographer provided training on how to record the highest quality video possible even from the faculty member's office. The Faculty Center provided video tutorials as well as example videos from faculty information to further support digital content creation.

Goal 3 proved to be the most time-consuming for both faculty and the supporting staff. Since each professor had a different purpose and setting (usually an office) for the videos, the range of quality proved to be more volatile than originally hoped. With revision of the best practices, the faculty forum on video production, and the recording studio available, over time the video quality will continue to improve as faculty become familiar with the tools.

Goal 4: Evaluate courses according to standards and expectations

In an effort to guide several faculty in creating quality video content, the grant funds supplied a stipend for twelve faculty to develop new video content for their blended course according to the best practices. The students of these courses provided feedback on the video quality. These twelve faculty also provided feedback on their experience using the software, hardware, and best practices. Survey details and results can be found in Appendix 2, but the summary of the finding are as follows.

Students were asked to respond to a survey regarding the use of the new videos and the effect on learning those videos added. Although there was a wide range of faculty skill in creating the videos and use for the videos in the courses, students perceived the videos to be high quality in audio and video clarity. They appreciated the fact that faculty included PowerPoint or other media into the videos. Students believed that the videos increased their satisfaction with the course and would take another course with a video component of this quality.

Representative comments from students regarding the use of video in their course include:

- "Very useful resource that could be viewed number of times to strengthen my understanding."
- "I appreciated having the ability to use these videos as a resource. Video elements like this are a great tool for visual learners such as myself."
- "Good resource and the convenience of viewing was handy."

Additionally, each of the twelve faculty members responded to a survey regarding the use of video as well as the effectiveness of implementing the best practices. Regarding the creation of video content, these faculty found it easy to record, finish, upload, and share a video, but were more challenged to edit the video. With the new hardware (webcam or studio), these faculty had less trouble maintaining quality audio or video clarity.

When asked about the effectiveness of the video for the class, these faculty believed that adding video did improve student learning overall. They were less convinced that the video added to a deeper in-class discussion, but were still optimistic. These faculty were overall interested in adding video to future classes.

Regarding the implementation of the best practices as outlined in the document (see Goal 1), the faculty who did implement the following principles found them helpful or very helpful: Organizing content into modules, including clear instructions to find online materials, community formation through online interaction, providing substantive feedback, following copyright and fair use law, keeping video under twenty minutes each, adding media to video, assessing student comprehension of video, use of HD webcam, use of the studio, and adjusting their PowerPoint to adhere to the best practices.

These faculty were also given the opportunity to make a comment about their experience in implementing these best practices. Common themes in their responses included an appreciation for the increased quality of video and effectiveness in their course. Many faculty mentioned that they felt the video creation process took longer than planned, but also anticipated both quality and time spent to improve as they become more familiar with the tool.

Helpful comments from faculty included:

- "I just need more time to learn to edit and use all the features available to me."
- "It was very fun, and was very absorbing. It took a great deal of time to learn how to do various tasks (recording, editing, adding clips and images), but once I learned those things it was really quite easy."
- "It was not difficult to do, but added greatly to the class."

Goal 5: *Evaluate standards and expectations according to faculty generated research, student surveys, and on-going research of the field.*

Since "best practices" become the best through experience and research over time, the faculty at Gateway approach the best practice document (see Goal 1) as continually subject to revision. As technologies enhance, student needs change, and faculty skill increases, the principles outlined in that document will be revised.

The first revision of the best practice document was initiated in March 2018 after faculty completed goals 2-4. Once having completed training, implemented the concepts, and received student feedback, the faculty had a much better grasp on what might need to be revised in the document. Changes were made concerning the expectations for time spent editing videos, minimum size font for studio PowerPoints, adding technical support information, and various grammatical clarifications. The most recent version of the best practices can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition to the revision of the best practices, multiple resources were added to the Faculty Center in order to support faculty through instructional design and content creation. Resources concerning video editing, plagiarism, copyright/fair use, and accessibility were added. A discussion board was also opened so that faculty could continue to make recommendations for improving the best practices.

Issues and Questions

Some of the issues and questions that were encountered while implementing this project were as follows:

What level of video quality do we expect faculty to produce for themselves?
By focusing on learning, we were able to set achievable goals for video quality. Simple principles like clear audio, certain font sizes in presentation slides, and sufficient lighting helped make the quality goal more tangible. We also provided multiple examples and gave feedback on video attempts. Setting a realistic goal that also produce a quality outcome was key to achievement.

How will we encourage faculty to attempt to achieve these best practices?
Since aligning coursework and materials to the best practices takes time, we offered compensation to faculty who were willing to attempt it. They were given support and were asked to share their experience for the benefit of the whole faculty. The desire for better quality content was so strong that many faculty were willing to work on their content without compensation.

How do we equip faculty to think pedagogically in moving from one delivery system to another?
Our attempt during this project has been to identify pedagogical concepts that would be common to all delivery systems and then allow the professor to determine if and how those concepts could be used in his or her specific course. By creating an atmosphere among faculty that considers best practices in general has created conversation and fresh consideration of teaching strategies.

To what extent will we hold faculty accountable to achieving the best practices?
Due to the learning curve and the variety of needs per course or per delivery system, we decided not to include the best practices in the formal evaluation process of the course. Instead, by continuing the conversation on best practices, training them in pedagogical and technological skills, and fostering a peer-led community of inquiry, the faculty are discovering the best practices that work best for their course and their needs.

Opportunities and Benefits
Some of the opportunities and benefits that were encountered while implementing this project were as follows:

Instructors are more equipped to teach their content in any delivery system.
By collaborating on best practices, fostering a community of learning among the faculty, and equipping instructors with the means to achieve quality, this project has helped faculty teach better in every delivery system that Gateway Seminary offers. They feel more confident that they can learn the skills and use the tools available to them for this purpose.

The expectation level of digital content quality was raised across the institution.
Without equipment and minimum standards, it was difficult to provide support to faculty or help them achieve better quality digital content. Now, with consistent software, hardware, and expectations, support staff can serve the faculty as they seek to develop new content online for a variety of delivery systems.

Faculty led in conversations about pedagogical topics stimulating faculty development as collaborative and innovative.
Providing training was clearly a much desired opportunity for our faculty. From that training, those faculty members were enthusiastic about adjustments to their teaching, informed when asking administration for support, and adept in helping other faculty. The faculty-led webinar

produced a deeper conversation among faculty as they collaborated about innovative concepts regarding teaching.

Faculty owned and invested into their own curriculum process.
When this sort of collaborative and innovative culture is formed among faculty, instructional design can be led by the faculty. They are the primary agents responsible for their curriculum quality which means that they are highly invested in the curriculum itself. They craft their course with their subject matter expertise and their understanding of the best practices. Therefore, when they teach the course, they can make adjustments, create new content, or engage with learners immediately and independently. Rather than using a master course that is pre-made for them, faculty are constantly improving on their own content and instructional methods to best serve students.

Challenges and Obstacles
Some of the challenges and obstacles that were encountered while implementing this project were as follows:

Learning curve for pedagogy practice, technology, and subject matter.
The most common response among the faculty who were chosen to create new digital content in this project was that they felt that there was a significant learning curve in this project. They have a better understanding of what can be done, but it will be a constant process of improvements and adjustments in order to achieve their desired outcome. As they learn the technology and gain experiential insight into the pedagogy, they are optimistic about growing in their skill.

Time.
Content creation, video editing, learning new pedagogy all takes a considerable amount of time. Faculty reported that the time it took to learn the new technology tools especially was unexpected. Adjustments to the best practice document now include a statement about this due to the experience of faculty during the project. Faculty, however, did not think that this was a deterrent, but felt that as they learned the tool, they would become more efficient.

Providing enough support for quality video creation.
Although faculty-led instructional design has creating a fruitful culture of innovation and quality, supporting faculty in this effort, especially in video creation, has required time and skill from support staff. Preparing the studio, giving one-on-one support, and supplying tutorials and helps were all necessary for helping faculty create higher quality digital content.

Insights, Innovative Ideas, and Possibilities
Some of the insights, innovative ideas, and possibilities that were inspired by this project were as follows:

Empowering faculty in instructional design fosters a community of innovation.
Faculty who are earnestly attempting to design an effective course in varied delivery systems are more likely to depend on their peers for feedback, support, and ideas. Together, they shared ideas, struggles, and possibilities for achieving excellence in every delivery system. This camaraderie breeds an environment of innovation and acceptance of new methodologies.

Through collaboration about best practices, faculty can become the innovators.
As faculty are more informed, more engaged, and more responsible in instructional design, their ability to navigate with agility in learning environment increases. They may not only be more apt to adopt new delivery systems, but actually be the impetus for the innovative delivery system itself. As they together discover best practices for each delivery system, the soil is fertile for further innovation or even new delivery systems that have not yet been attempted.

Recommended Practices
Due to the nature of this project, our recommendations for practice can be found in the best practice document (Appendix 1). While we believe these are important practices to maintain, we also acknowledge that faculty are continually learning more about the varied delivery systems and how to best teach through them. Therefore, we also recommend the following:

- that best practices be applicable for the varied delivery systems that exist now and anticipate what may exist in the future.
- that faculty be invited to collaborate and critique the best practices as they become more experienced in teaching via certain delivery systems or using certain technologies.
- that new delivery systems be examined pedagogically and technologically to ensure high quality instruction.

Furthering a Culture of Innovation at Gateway Seminary
When faculty and administration have a common goal to serve as many students as we can as best as we can, then the question becomes "How?" Through research, practice, and collaboration, Gateway Seminary continues to fine-tune the "how" in order to serve students around the world in innovative ways. This common goal fuels the faculty to seek to teach in every delivery system with quality and excellence.

In this project, we have attempted to set a tone at Gateway Seminary that invites critique, improvement, and standards for practice. By fostering conversations among faculty, our faculty are examining their own practices, learning from their peers, and looking at research that informs their instruction. We hope that this culture of innovation not only yields fruitful instruction in existing delivery systems, but also is an impetus for new, innovative ideas in the future.

Resource List and Evaluation
In addition to the bibliography included at the end of the report, the primary outside resource used by Gateway in this grant project was the Online Learning Consortium (https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/). This organization is focused on research, training, and collaboration regarding online education. Depending on faculty experience with online education, we provided either the foundation course or the advanced certificate to select faculty to implement this grant project. Further, with the remainder grant funds, we will also provide an additional six workshops to select faculty for professional development.

The Online Learning Consortium is one of the best resources for training in online education. Supported by extensive research, each course or certificate provides the attendee with ample information as well as practical assignments that require revision of online course content in order to achieve best practices. Additionally, the entire training is conducted online, which gives the attendee the opportunity to be an online student which is a first for many. Overall, I would recommend this resource as an outside tool for professional and faculty development in online education.

Appendix 1
Best Practices for Blended Learning
Gateway Seminary 2017-2018

Faculty Grant Team Members: Rick Durst, Paul Kelly, Steve Veteto, Gregg Watson, and Kristen Ferguson
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Introduction
Blended learning is a term that encompasses delivery systems where part of the course is completed from a distance. At Gateway Seminary, blended learning includes remote access and hybrid courses. The practices below reflect faculty collaboration and research in an effort to maintain a high standard of instruction in any delivery system. These practices can be generally applied to online education and traditional education as relevant.

General
- Calculation of hours of coursework should be a combination of all on-campus and online components (See Faculty Center>Developing an Online Course for calculation formula).
- Clear information about the division of coursework between on-campus and online should be communicated to students.
- Information about accessing the online course components should be present in the course syllabus.
- All course content should follow copyright and fair use law (See Faculty Center> Copyright and Fair Use).
- All online components should be both professional-looking and well-organized, but maintain the professor's own personality and character.
- Instructors are encouraged to share their pedagogical plans and practices with their fellow faculty, both what is working and what is not working, for the benefit of educational effectiveness.

Online Components
- Online components should be organized into Modules for quick reference and clear structure. (A “module” is a grouping of assignments, content, or information according to week or unit of study.)
- All online components of any delivery system should include clear instructions for finding, completing, and submitting the required elements for the course.
- Timely feedback in online assignments and discussions is highly recommended for students’ participation, development, and formation. Student perception of sustained presence of the instructor in the course has a direct impact on student learning.
- Discussions
    - Clear expectations about substance, length, and frequency of posts should be communicated to students.

    - Discussion prompts should not be merely objective in nature, but provide material in which students can critically engage one another and the content.
- Quizzes
    - To promote integrity in students, professors should take into account the nature of online education when requiring a quiz. (e.g. open-book with time limit; or using a proctor with supplied contact information for verification)
- Group Work
    - For blended courses, providing time on-campus for groups to begin work is recommended for fostering community and success in online group work.

Online Community and Spiritual Formation

- Professors should respond to student inquiries (email, phone, or other means) within 24-48 hours to foster community and promptly address student questions and concerns.
- Professors should provide regular updates or announcements during online component of the course to maintain community and student engagement.
- Professors should foster an online learning community by providing opportunities for students to interact with one another, with course content, and with the instructor.
- Professors should provide opportunities for students to apply class content to their own context.
- Professors are encouraged to assign collaborative work to foster a learning community.
- Professors should provide opportunities for the student to reflect on his or her own growth as a result of contact with course content, peer interaction, and professor interaction.
- Professors should provide substantive and engaging feedback to encourage formation.

Remote Access

Technology

- Details about the software and hardware requirements should be communicated in the syllabus.
- A pre-semester test of video conference software with students is recommended.
- Students should be required to use headphones with a microphone for quality audio and elimination of feedback and echoes.
- Instructors should communicate an alternate form of contact (email or phone) that remote access students can utilize should the experience technical difficulties.
- It is recommended that remote access class times should be recorded and posted on the course LMS.
- Lapel microphones should be worn by the professor during the lecture (contact IT to borrow a lapel mic).
- Classroom microphones should be on when class discussion is happening.
- It is recommended that instructors use a tablet computer for digital whiteboard capabilities as needed.

Pedagogy

- Professors should maximize synchronous participation with remote access students during class sessions but an asynchronous online discussion should be made available to remote access students for questions or comments about the synchronous class time.
- Professors should provide clear directions and expectations for completing coursework remotely.
- Pedagogy should be designed to optimize the experience of face-to-face and remote students. This may require a variation or replacement of the in-class pedagogy for remote students.
- Professors should use the course LMS for remote student assignment submissions, class handouts, further resources, discussions, etc.
- While learning objectives will not change, assessments for remote access students should take into consideration their distance and use of the video conferencing software.
- Professors are encouraged to facilitate active learning strategies both online and face-to-face to allow students the opportunity to practice implementing and applying course content.

Video Creation

General

- All video must contain high quality audio without echo, static, or background noises that can detract from the educational purpose of the video.
- Audio must be in sync with video.
- All video content should consistently maintain a high quality image, i.e., no pixelation, blur, angle distortion, distracting exposure, or anything that can detract from the educational purpose of the video. (NOTE: Students state that videos can detract from learning if they are poor audio or video quality.)
- If video content is not generated from Gateway Seminary, proper permissions should be acquired to use it in the course.
- If video content is not generated from Gateway Seminary or its employees, the media should be reviewed thoroughly to ensure all content is edifying for seminary students.
- It is recommended that videos be no longer than 20 minutes each.
- It is recommended that the professor segment course content into topics or units for organization and ease of viewing.
- Students prefer PowerPoint/Keynote within videos that optimize learning, therefore it is recommended that professors include appropriate presentations slides where needed.
- Students prefer quality images, graphs, and other visual elements that pertain to the content and are not extraneous, therefore, it is recommended that professors include additional media in the video as needed.
- Comprehension of content within video should be assessed within the course curriculum by such means as but not limited to discussion, quizzes, and written assignments.

- All videos created under a contract should contain the official Gateway Seminary Bumper (See Faculty Center>Videos)
- In creating videos, professors should plan for enough time to record, edit, and convert the file to .mp4. Time to complete a video depends on amount of edits needed, speed of computer, and speed of internet.
- Videos should be uploaded and stored on the Gateway Vimeo account: How to Upload to Vimeo (See Faculty Center>Videos)
- Videos should be embedded into Canvas rather than linked: How to Embed on Canvas (See Faculty Center>Videos)

In-Office Video Recording

- Professors should use the HD webcam provided to them or one of similar quality.
- Audio quality of the provided HD webcam is sufficient if environment is adequately quite. If the professor does not have an adequate microphone or quiet environment, IT has several high quality microphones that can be borrowed.
- Professors should adhere to the PowerPoint template best practices (see below) or use a PowerPoint template found in the Faculty Center.
- Camera shot should be at a reasonably straight angle.
- Camera shot should be at professor's approximate eye level, not too far above eye level or below eye level.

Studio Video Recording

- If PowerPoints are included in studio recording, they should adhere to the PowerPoint best practices (below) and contain a minimum font size of 28.
- Camera, background, audio, and props should be set up for quality by AV, IA, IT, or Online.
- All videos created in the studio should contain the official Gateway Seminary Bumper.

PowerPoint/Keynote Best Practices

- Gateway Seminary provides instructors with PowerPoint templates for quality design. Instructors may choose to use these templates or adhere to the below best practices.
- Slides should have limited text and bullet points to highlight key words or phrases.
- Slides should contain high quality images that are meant to highlight the key concepts being taught. Pixelated or unrelated images can distract from learning.
- Slides should contain limited color palette that will not distract from learning and be easy to watch within video. A high contrast color scheme is helpful to improve accessibility for students with visual challenges. A white background is not recommended for studio use.
- When recording a voice-over presentation, font size should be a minimum of 12 point.
- Slides should limit use of animation that might distract from learning. Fades are recommended for animation while flying objects and pulsating might be more distracting unless used sparingly for a specific purpose.
- Slides should be 16:9 instead of 4:3 ratio so that the slide takes up the whole width of the video.

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