Online Education

Managing Time (Part 1)

One of the most common questions I hear is, "how much time is it going to take to develop my online course?" This question reminds me of similar questions such as, "How long does it take to build a house?" and "How long does it take to make dinner?" The answers to these, of course, are, "it depends." As a general rule, however, you can expect about one hundred hours of development time investment to create your online course. This is for a course that you've already taught face-to-face several times and with assistance from a UAF eLearning Instructional Designer.

The ideal outcome of the development process is that your course is completed well ahead of a given term. All of your activities, assignments, assessments, and scheduling structural work are completed before students walk through the virtual classroom door. This is one of the big differences between online teaching and face-to-face teaching. Much of one's time investment in an online course occurs before the semester begins. That is a lot of time to extract from your summer, or to squeeze from your already busy semester.

However, once your course is open and the semester begins, everyone reaps the benefits of your development investment. You're not planning tomorrow's lecture and class activities so much as interacting with students and providing assessment, feedback, and mentoring.

Earlier this spring, UAF eLearning sponsored a series of lectures by Oregon State University faculty member Dr. Sebastian Heiduschke. Dr. Heiduschke led an effort at OSU to bring their undergraduate major in German online. He put together a nice illustration of the time commitment differences between between face-to-face and online education. (see figure)

While I would say that most who approach online course development for the first time underestimate the time commitment involved, Dr. Heiduschke's illustration provides some hope for those already overbooked.

Time commitment online v. f2f

Online instruction — F2f instruction
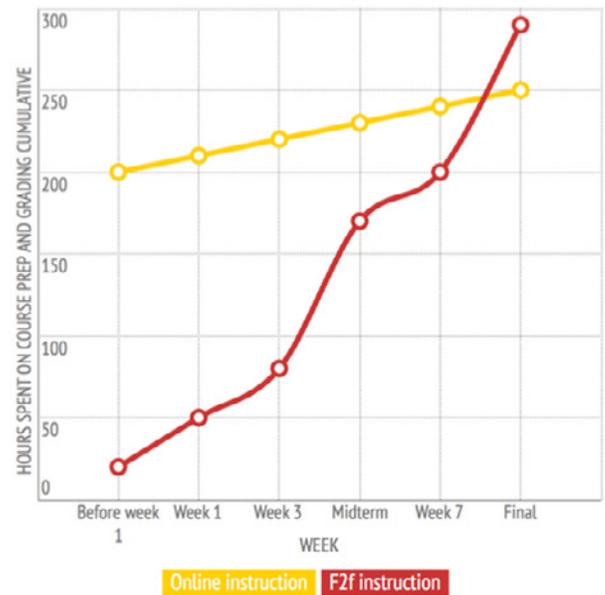
That being said, some do approach online education thinking they have found a magical solution for already overloaded schedules. Some do get swept away with the idea that they can avoid the time constraints of face-to-face teaching, or get caught up in the misconception that one's courses will somehow teach themselves once they're available online. One could technically teach while at the beach, for example. But, let me tell you, when you dance with online education, you are potentially tangoing with a high maintenance, jealous lover. Without some clear communication, this new relationship can have little regard for your other time obligations.

For instance, while it is true that teaching online can provide some schedule flexibility, it is also true that you can now teach on weekends. And those hours after midnight when your kids are in bed, those can be devoted to teaching as well! Yay!

Next week, we'll talk about steps you can take to establish some relationship boundaries with your online course. We'll talk about how you can reap the rewards of teaching online and have a life at the same time.

Meanwhile, enjoy some of Dr. Heiduschke's insights about his experiences developing online courses and bringing the German major online:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKwqTwTRaSM

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