Chapter 88

Developing Faculty to Effectively Use Mobile Learning Technologies in Collegiate Classes:
A Guide for Department Chairs

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ABSTRACT

Mobile devices have become a common accessory for many college students, and with the habits and tendencies that have formed from frequent use, colleges have begun to incorporate mobile devices into the delivery of education. As mobile learning has grown as a teaching strategy, some faculty have found it difficult to adapt to open access to computing, and others have simply attempted to ignore the new reliance on technology. Department chairs are uniquely situated to bridge the world of technology and the contemporary campus, and through strategic and intentional faculty development, they have the potential to successfully bring mobile learning to higher education. Throughout the chapter, strategies outline how to use adult learning to build faculty development programs that encourage the effective use of m-learning as an instructional strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities are being called upon to adapt to the changing nature of student interests, characteristics, and behaviors. Such changes range from the structure of residence hall rooms and the food selections offered in cafeterias to the kinds of digital materials libraries acquire and how technology is utilized to facilitate learning. The bulk of these kind of changes can be accounted for in Sporn's (1999) theory of adaptation, where organizations, including colleges and universities, either change or adapt their operations to meet user needs, or they become obsolete. This is particularly true in competitive organizations, such as colleges and universities that must compete for students, faculty, and other resources.

One significant way that colleges and universities have adapted to recent changes in student and faculty behavior and interest is through the inclusion and integration of technology. Technology has become a common element in traditional classroom presentations and teaching (such as PowerPoint presentations), how learning is distributed (such as online courses), how students register and manage their enrollment, and even how students access their grades, plot progress toward graduation, and run simulations about changing majors. Most recently, college leaders have begun to look more critically at how mobile technologies can be used to enhance or augment the collegiate experience.

Mobile technologies are those that make use of wireless technologies to access some sort of data. In the case of higher education, these data are typically class lectures, notes, readings, assignments, etc. that students connect with to either participate fully or partially in coursework. This type of education has been termed "m-learning" and is most effective when it is interactive among two or more individuals (E-Learning, 2013). M-learning tools include such devices as cell phones, Kindles, Nooks, e-readers, iPads and other digital readers, and MP3 players. Each of these devices has the element of portability, allowing users to physically move about a campus without being attached to a single location.

There are multiple challenges for integrating m-learning into the college campus, including the challenge of developing buy-in or consensus about using these technologies by college faculty. Few argue the centrality of faculty members as the primary tool for student learning, although generational issues have sparked debate about the intention, role, and appropriate use of technology. Some of this debate has arisen from those who see 'digital-immigrants' as resisting technology. Digital immigrants are those who were raised or received their academic training prior to the internet revolution, and the argument holds that because they are new, or newer, to technology, they resist its use out of stubbornness or an unwillingness to see value in technology-mediated learning. The immigrants' primary rallying cry has been traced to any number of possibly related variables, such as poor student performance, poor student achievement in comparison to global competitors, an over-involvement from parents, grade inflation in high school, and even a diminished work ethic among the Millennial generation.

There is another camp of college faculty, a group that is rising and emerging on college campuses, that embraces technology as real mechanism for student learning. These faculty members support traditional classes with Blackboard (or privately hosted) websites, capture their lectures and classroom discussion through audio and video for easy replay by students, and even web-cast their classroom presentations to enhance accessibility, a challenge to the notion that a class lecture must meet at particular day and time. Another element is the rise of online coursework, an experience that can bring together students from anywhere in the world in real-time environments to share experiences and perspectives and to work toward a degree.

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