Untethered Community of Practice End of Year Summary

Goals

Our experiment in the untethered classroom is not about the technology—it is not about using the latest, neatest gadgets. This is about facilitating deeper learning; learning that goes beyond rote memorization and surface recall. Our hypothesis is that we can increase student engagement by increasing faculty engagement. Rather than standing behind a lectern speaking for hours on end, or disrupting a great student insight to get up and advance a slide, faculty should be free to roam around the classroom, sit amongst the students and facilitate a community of inquiry from the position of a co-learner.

Once instructors are free to move away from the podium, they will be encouraged and empowered to interact more with their students. Faculty will be able to more easily incorporate active learning strategies into their courses. Instructors who are mobile can listen in on student discussions, guide groups as they work through problems, catch common misconceptions and in general be free to participate in the learning community.

Results

The Community of Practice evaluations were mostly positive, with faculty stating that they learned quite a lot that will help them in their future courses. Most participants appreciated being able to use the iPad in their classroom. Incorporating active learning strategies along with the use of the iPad proved key. Simply lecturing from a mobile device instead of from the podium did not change an instructor's teaching practice, or enhance student learning. Therefore, the CoPs focus on pedagogy was helpful. We had discussions on pedagogy, classroom design, collaboration, and active learning, in addition to sessions on how to use and troubleshoot the technology. While most faculty were enthusiastic about using their iPads in the classroom, many expressed frustration with classroom design.

Quotes from the year end evaluation

Appreciation for the iPad

"Using iPad definitely took me away from the podium. I walked among students, and utilized the writable walls more because I can move around with the ipad. Secondly, trying to use iPad more in the classroom makes me more intentional with course design. It encourages me to think more on how I can design my class in order to have students engaged in learning and on what I can provide in terms of assignments and resources."

"I appreciate being able to hand a student a tool that gives them instant access to the internet when they've come without their own laptop/tablet to class."

"It [the iPad] provides flexibility to move around in the classroom as needed."

"I usually need to type a lot and feel more comfortable with using the logitech keyboard, but this keeps me still at a desk or table. I am still needing to improve my "elegance" with using Splashtop or AppleTV, but feel much more comfortable than I did at the beginning of the CoP."

Technical Issues

"When the iPad projects it is still rather small on the screen."

"Not always sure if AppleTV will work; don't have direct control of it via an AppleTV remote. Haven't used Splashtop enough to feel comfortable with it."

"1. The technology is not always reliable. Sometimes it works better than others. 2. I am running into problems with storage that impacts usability."

"Using splashtop is not quite as seamless as I had hoped. Every once in a while switching to splashtop goes wrong and only half of my screen shows up or it doesn't project properly."

"I couldn't always connect on Splashtop."

"I had to spend more time in designing and pondering the results of the class. This is positive, but I would like to balance between research and teaching. After you learn how to use iPad in your classroom, you would like to be in the classroom where you can use iPad. Sometimes, it's very cumbersome to ask for the apple-tv equipped classrooms and disappointing to find out none of those equipped classrooms are not available."

"I have yet to be in a room (to my knowledge) with Apple TV, so I'm still inexperienced with that."

Classroom Design

"It's a pipe dream, but real untethered learning will require redoing the rooms, which are now designed mostly with a "sage on stage" model of teaching. To be really untethered there's got to be the right synergy of classroom design, technology, and pedagogy."

"It doesn't seem that the classroom environments at SPU really support moving away from the podium."

"I really wish that administration of SPU understands how important the learning space is. It's not only for students but also for professors. At least, writable walls and movable tables and chairs are necessary."

"I learned a lot of good things, but classrooms were not supportive."

"I know the numbers and scheduling were challenging, but consistency in the groups would be helpful, so I would suggest keeping things small. For CIS, I would say that rolling out AppleTV functionality in more classrooms as soon as possible would be great, and that Splashtop is a good resource to have"

Other Comments

"I want to acknowledge how patient and understanding Robbin and Ryan were during every CoP meeting. They were able to work effectively with us at all of our different skill/ability levels. The CoP hour was always the highlight of my week."

"The training you've offered with the technology is so helpful."

"I am very thankful that you selected people who had no experience with this technology. Although the learning curve was steep, the skills gained are incredibly valuable. And I will now continue learning how to use the technology."

"I think that participation in the CoP has made me even more reflective of my teaching strategies. I have also enjoyed hearing from colleagues and having the opportunity to think about all the similar yet distinct goals we have in our classrooms."

"I use the iPad a lot more to generate handouts (with beauty, ease, and clarity) and facilitate review documents on Google docs. When possible, I use the iPad to help me control the computer and leave the front of the classroom. This is more feasible in some of my classes than others, so it is a struggle to make connections for all of my classes. Being in the CoP, however, has helped a lot. I like having a space/time set aside to learn from and share with colleagues. Many have more experience than I do, and we all have different ideas. I have been able to take away many great ideas and strategies for my own teaching."

"The CoP has opened my eyes to how I can use the iPad in class to improve student learning; I expect that it will have an impact in future quarters as I am able to implement listening-speaking activities, and video recording in the future."

"Learning from colleagues in other departments is huge for me. I hate working isolate. That's one of things that I would get rid of as working as a professor. This kind of community helps my students as well as me improving my teaching skills and being connected to the SPU community."

"Robbin and Ryan rock the Kasbah. They made this whole CoP thing worthwhile. I appreciate their knowledge of tech and their willingness to teach us. I hope to take more classes from them in the future."

Moving Forward

Next year's group will meet for 10 consecutive weeks during fall quarter, then twice per month during winter and spring quarter. One meeting during winter and spring quarter will take place with a faculty mentor (classroom observation and one teaching and learning coffee break). Meeting in a more traditional class format will help faculty get comfortable with the technology more quickly and will provide more accountability and social support for practicing with the device. Hopefully this format will also allow more time for course redesign, as we found that faculty needed dedicated time to redo entire lessons in order to include more active learning. Increasing the number of Apple TVs on campus will ensure that more faculty can practice using both Splashtop and AirPlay.

Next Steps

- Add Apple TVs to Bertona classrooms
- Applications
- Select members
- Purchase supplies
- Schedule faculty in Apple TV rooms as possible
- Scheduling meeting times
- Recruiting faculty mentors
- Finishing class syllabus
- Complete untethered resource/guide book
- Other items: General campus splashtop/Apple TV workshop, writing up CoP paper, IRB approval for qualitative study on effectiveness format of faculty development, sell 2 iPad Airs +accessories, become more familiar with various active learning strategies and their theoretical underpinnings