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Wounded Educators
Gulnora Hundley

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Introduction

Are you a Wounded Educator? You do not need a bandaged hand, an arm in a sling, or a cast on your leg to be a Wounded Educator. Wounded Educators are those who have wounds we cannot see, wounds that are rarely discussed, and are the hardest to heal. These wounds are as diverse as the individuals who bear them, but every wound has a single, common basis: vulnerability to stress.

Educators are facing challenges and demands that were never envisaged by the academic community. This is especially relevant given the current COVID pandemic. Instructors have had to adjust their established, familiar classroom practices to facilitate teaching in a virtual environment. For many, this required rapid assimilation of new technologies and online teaching pedagogies. Compounding the frenzy to re-orient their academic classrooms, many educators have also had to take on the role of overseeing their children's home-schooling.

Teaching is now recognized as a stressful occupation. Many educators experience secondary traumatic stress ("compassion fatigue"), which comes from dealing with students who are in crisis. Additionally, educators may have their own traumatic wounds that they never explored or have chosen to ignore.

Most educators learn how to mask their stress, but the overload is still noticeable. Stressed educators begin to exhibit forgetfulness, unclear thinking, or emotional outbursts. They begin to suffer from depression, insomnia, panic attacks, alcohol or drug abuse, and relationship difficulties. These are the Wounded Educators.

Wounded Educators cannot effectively educate or positively influence their students. Wounded Educators work inefficiently and thus become overwhelmed by their workload, feel constrained by their work, and begin to sacrifice important aspects of their personal lives in order to get the job done. Wounded Educators may be unwilling to ask for help, or likely, don't know how to ask for help. Thus, the internal cycle churns on, deepening the wounds.

So, are you a Wounded Educator? If you are, you can begin to heal yourself. The first step is to acknowledge that you are wounded. The second step is to begin to understand yourself. The third step is to regain yourself.

Read on to learn about the "Three B's" that will help you to acknowledge and understand yourself. Finally, learn how to begin to "Balance" your life in order to regain your sense of self.

The Three B's
Unhelpful Beliefs

Many of our personal beliefs, positive and negative, become so ingrained that our brains no longer detect them. These beliefs are on "autopilot," and become no more than white noise in our day-to-day life. However, these autopilot beliefs affect how we think and act. Unhelpful beliefs can cause us to do damage to ourselves and others around us. To recognize or "find" an unhelpful belief so that you

can change or eliminate it, you must first "catch" yourself thinking it. Teach yourself to be aware of and attuned to your subconscious thinking processes. This is a challenging task, but one that can have great rewards.

Unhealthy Behaviors
Many of us also respond to adversities in our lives by engaging in negative behaviors that we know are unhealthy, such as eating too much comfort food, drinking too much, lashing out at a loved one. Other negative behaviors, like preferring to binge on a favorite TV show than do a task that needs to be done, become so ingrained that we no longer think of it as being "unhealthy." Turning just one unhealthy behavior into a healthy behavior can be the first step to adopting better, healthier habits.

Burnout
Burnout is characterized by three states: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Being exhausted, physically, or mentally, leads to becoming cynical about what you do. Cynicism leads to becoming inefficient and ineffective. Burnout becomes a vicious cycle. The more exhausted we become, the more cynical we become about an increasing number of things. Increased cynicism often leads to an increased disregard for everything and everyone around us. To control the burnout, we must first accept the fact that we are burned out and then we must ask for help. This process is not always a straightforward and is often not one that we can do alone.

Balance
The COVID-19 pandemic forced the world into a state of self-isolation. Educators had to make an abrupt adjustment in the form re-tooling course pedagogy to online teaching and virtual classrooms, managed from their homes.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the world into a state of self-isolation. Educators had to make an abrupt adjustment in the form of re-tooling course pedagogy to online teaching and virtual classrooms, managed from their homes. Working from home has its advantages, but there are drawbacks. First, our *home* environment is contaminated by our *work* environment, which is now in a space that had been used for leisure or relaxation. Second, virtual meetings allow us to see each other, but cannot provide the synergy of being in a classroom. Third, we develop a sense of disconnectedness.

Self-isolation, loss of synergy, and becoming disconnected increase our sense of loneliness, even if we are at home with our family. There is no longer a distinction between home life and work life, which leads to a sense of imbalance.

Balance is a foundation of self-care. Balance is our innate need to keep our minds and our bodies functioning efficiently.

Balance needs to be a continuous process, rather than an ideal state or destination.

Many educators are inclined to think that their work, their students, and their dedication to their university are the most important aspects of their lives. That is unbalanced thinking. Life, the ultimate teacher, can quickly remind us that we need to pay attention to what really matters while we can—and this means balancing our working lives with our personal lives.

To re-balance yourself, think of your life as a pizza pie. Now, slice the pie as evenly as possible. Label each slice with daily activities, such as Time with Spouse/Partner, Time with My Kids, Work, Leisure, Personal Care, Sleep. Be sure to "eat" every slice, every day.

Balancing your life is a never-ending journey. You will have to continually re-slice and re-label the pizza pie as life changes around you. Staying balanced is the goal.

Our best educator role models are not those who are the most charismatic, busiest, or those who teach the longest. Our best educator role models are those whose lives are well-balanced and, thus, are able to do great work with their teaching and make lasting, positive impressions on their students.

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Serving Latino/a/x Students Through Pedagogy and Undergraduate Research
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The University of Central Florida was federally-designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in January 2019. This critical milestone elevated the need for UCF to self-reflect on how it serves Latino/a/x students and other minoritized groups. As an institution, understanding what this designation means and working collectively to ensure success of our students is critical. In an effort to increase institutional readiness to serve, many faculty and staff have been engaged in development, training, and collaboration focused on Hispanic-serving practices. This essay is the product of one such collaboration and will identify important understandings for better serving the diverse population of Latino/a/x students at UCF as well as describe some of the work that has been completed across campus.

What is an HSI?
The US Department of Education defines an HSI as an institution with a full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate student enrollment that is at least 25% Hispanic/Latino. Inherent in this definition is the focus on number of Latino/a/x students enrolled as opposed to a specific institutional mission to serve these students. UCF attained this enrollment milestone in 2016 and as of Fall 2020, it had 29.1% (n=17,928) students who identified as Latino/a/x.

Nationwide, UCF ranks sixth for awarding degrees to Latino/a/x students, furthering the urgency of engaging with the University community about what it means to serve in this capacity. Due to recent demographic shifts, the Latino/a/x are projected to be 29% of the US population by 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2008). Large number of Hispanic/Latino population is evident in California (26 million), Texas (19 million), and Florida (9 million). The Center for Puerto Rican Studies Population observes that between 2010 and 2017, there was 26% increase in number of Puerto Ricans residing in Florida alone. This number was further accelerated by Hurricane Maria which led to migration to the US mainland. At the institutional (UCF) level, the percentage of Latino/a/x students has been increasing steadily from 25.3% (n=14,101) in Fall 2016 to 29.1% (n=17,928) in Fall 2020. This growth underscores the need for continued readiness to serve diverse students who enroll.

Hispanic. vs Latino/a/x
Both Hispanic and Latino are pan-ethnic terms that have no "official" definition. The term Hispanic was created in the United States in the 1970s to identify the significant population in some regions of the country with origins from Spanish-speaking countries (e.g., Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico). Latino is typically agreed-upon as an umbrella term for anyone who identifies with a country in Latin America. Most recently the terms Latinx or Latine have emerged as gender neutral alternatives intended to highlight the intersectionality of ethnicity with gender identity and gender expression. Varying generational perspectives, preferences to identify with a personal nationality (e.g., Colombian), and raised consciousness around the historical impact of Spanish legacy across the Americas (e.g., colonialism, slavery, genocide) have resulted in more complicated conversations about all of these terms and no general consensus.

Serving Through Pedagogy and Undergraduate Research
To serve students with multiple identities and linguistic backgrounds instructors are encouraged to integrate culturally relevant pedagogies (CRP) (Ladson-Billings 1995). By adopting this approach, culturally responsive instructors (1) focus on individual students' academic achievement, (2) have attained forms of cultural competence and help in developing students'

cultural competence, and (3) develop a sense of sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings 2001).

Undergirding any CRP is a culturally relevant curriculum, cultural caring in the classrooms, and engaging in effective communication across difference. In an institution as large and diverse as UCF, inter and intra department conversations are encouraged to better serve our students through the CRP approach. Additionally, the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning regularly offers programming about inclusive teaching and pedagogical responses to students' cultural, as well as individual, characteristics.

In addition to CRP and other inclusive teaching approaches high-impact practices can contribute to the mission of serving Hispanic and Latino/a/x students. In June 2019, five staff members from student-centered areas such as the Student Enrollment and Development Services (SDES), Burnett Honors College (BHC), the Division of Teaching and Learning, as well as the Center for Higher Education Innovation and the Parramore Education and Innovation District Community Partnerships, attended the annual conference of the Association of American Colleges and Universities on High-impact Practices (HIP). The UCF delegation was sponsored by *Excelencia in Education*, an organization which has as its goal to "accelerate Latino student success in higher education." The explicit goal for the delegation was to craft an action plan to enhance Latino student success at UCF by focusing on high-impact practices (Kuh 2008 and subsequent publications). The working group decided to focus on one high-impact practice to begin, and then to expand to others once a good model was established. In addition, the benefits of undergraduate research experiences for students are well-established: bridging the gap between theory and practical, real-life applications (Elgren and Hensel 2006); academic gains such as higher GPA and graduation rates (Maton, Hrabowski and Schmitt 2000) and retention (Nagda et al. 1998); greater self-confidence and self-efficacy (Seymour et al. 2004; Carpi et al. 2016); increased independence and intrinsic motivation to learn (Lopatto 2007); and higher interest in graduate study (Russell et al. 2007). These remarkable results may be even more pronounced for students from minoritized backgrounds, an effect especially pronounced among Hispanics/Latinos (Russell et al. 2007) and particularly in STEM (Carpi et al. 2016; Jones et al. 2010).

The working group then used National HSI week in September 2019 as an opportunity to launch a conversation about what the HSI designation means for UCF and obtain faculty perspectives about mentoring underrepresented minorities generally, and Hispanic/Latino/a/x students in particular. Faculty members from a cross-section of departments and disciplines (i.e., English, Physics, Sociology, Spanish, and Latin American Studies) were invited to participate in a panel sponsored by the Burnett Honors College in which they shared their views about (1) what faculty mentors can do to help increase and improve research experiences for Latino students, (2) specific challenges our Latino student population faces in Central Florida, and (3) resources and techniques faculty can use to help students persevere through difficulties and have a successful research experience.

Takeaways

The excellent turnout and vibrant discussion at the roundtable event were proof that UCF faculty are very motivated to discuss what it looks like to truly serve our student population. The conversation led to sharing important realities about being an effective HSI at UCF. Many perspectives were shared, including concerns about lack of faculty that reflect the identities of our students, faculty hiring challenges, outdated tenure and promotion criteria, and differing approaches to mentoring across difference. The panel engagement demonstrated the strong interest that exists among UCF faculty for discussing and understanding what UCF's HSI designation means not just for the institution in the abstract, but especially for them as instructors, researchers, and mentors. There was general agreement among attendees about the need to continue to regularly engage in this important conversation. Subsequent events, such as the working group's presentation at FCTL's Winter Conference in 2019, further confirmed faculty interest. UCF's Director of HSI Culture and Partnerships looks forward to continuing to build on the momentum to build a strong culture of support of and service to Latino students at UCF.

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HSI: Shifting Our Mindset and Institutional Culture
Cyndia Morales Muñiz

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HSI: Shifting Our Mindset and Institutional Culture
Every year during the first week of National Hispanic Heritage Month (September), the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) invites Hispanic-Serving Institutions around the country to also observe National HSIs Week. During this week of reflection and celebration, HSIs are encouraged to coordinate activities that heighten awareness of the important role HSIs play in improving access to education and advancing equity for historically underserved students. HSIs represent 17% of higher education institutions and enroll 67% of all Latino undergraduates in higher education (*Excelencia* in Education, 2020). HSIs also enroll a greater share of Black students in the United States than Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and a higher share of Native American students than Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) (Calderón Galdeano & Santiago, 2014). While HB-CUs and TCUs have a historical mission to explicitly support students from specific underrepresented backgrounds (Gasman, 2008) HSIs were defined in legislation by an enrollment threshold of Hispanic/Latino undergraduate students (Núñez, Hurtado, & Calderón Galdeano, 2015). During National HSIs Week several HSIs around the country affirm their commitment to serving Latino and other minoritized students and capitalize on the momentum of the week to further examine what it means to serve.

What does 'serving' mean at UCF?
I have studied Hispanic Serving Institutions for nearly a decade and have been actively involved in the national dialogue of what it means to go from Hispanic *enrolling* to Hispanic *serving* to Hispanic *thriving* for just as long. In reflecting on available literature and countless meeting of the minds, I offer the following HSI Principles to help guide our collective understanding, language, and approach to our HSI efforts at UCF. Our potential to become a model HSI rests on our ability to apply a Latino lens to each of the following principles, while maintaining our commitment to serving all our students equitably.

Our focus is SERVING in all its forms; Serving is multidimensional. We serve Latino and non-Latino students through pedagogy, mentoring, advising, language, family support, role modeling/representation, community engagement, etc.

We celebrate intentionality, intersectionality, and inclusivity, and believe they operate cohesively; We can implement intentional practices that better serve Latino students, acknowledge intersectional identities, and lived experiences across all communities, and practice inclusion. One does not eliminate the need for the other.

We embrace equity-minded policies and practices that enhance academic and career outcomes; We welcome the opportunity to reevaluate our structures with the goal to ensure equitable access and results.

We value the active role of cultural assets that enables success; Our students possess a wealth of cultural knowledge and strength that plays an active role in achieving their goals. Our pedagogy and programs should aim to complement our students' talents and determination.

Our purpose is to educate and empower; In addition to career content, we have the additional responsibility as an HSI to empower our Latino/a/x and other minoritized students to think big and to lead.

Learning to Serve Together

For a third consecutive year, UCF answered HACU's call to participate in National HSIs Week, September 14–18, 2020. This year's HSI Week celebration included a kickoff event, a book club activity, a panel discussion, and an open student forum. In this article, I will only highlight the book club activity and panel discussion as that is where we saw the most faculty participation.

The virtual book club was held over three sessions, and the featured book was *Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Practice: Defining "Servingness" at HSIs* (Garcia, 2020). I was able to secure the e-book format from UCF Libraries with support from our HSI Librarian and leaned on three colleagues to facilitate discussion on select chapters. The chapters focused on unifying equity practice, research, and policies; professional development; and mentorship and cultural belonging.

The HSI in Practice Panel featured eight faculty and staff members from six academic colleges and two divisions. Each of the panelists was asked to speak to initiatives/practices in their respective departments or colleges that align with UCF's HSI Principles. One faculty member mentioned how she advocated for the inclusion of HSI language in her college strategic plan. Another faculty member discussed the importance of serving students through culturally relevant research opportunities. Two additional panelists spoke to the incorporation of marketing materials and advising sessions in Spanish. The wide range of comments from the panelists illustrated a multitude of opportunities to serve in meaningful ways.

Evidence of 'Serving'

The HSI Principles I have shared are meant to help shape our mindset on the way in which we approach our HSI work. Measurable outcomes that are culturally relevant and center Latinx ways of knowing and being are also critical to the success of this work. I recommend the following two frameworks for faculty members interested in enhancing their capacity to better serve.

Excelencia in Education established the Seal of *Excelencia*, a national certification for institutions that strive to go beyond enrollment to better SERVE Latino students. The Seal of *Excelencia* framework has three core components: data, practice, and leadership. Each of these core components includes 5–6 key measurable areas. See www.edexcelencia.org/seal-excelencia-framework.

Garcia et al. (2019) propose the *Multidimensional Conceptual Framework for Understanding Servingness in HSIs* as a tool that can be used to define what it means to serve Latinxs within the context of HSIs. This framework takes into consideration the following areas: Structures for Serving; External Influences on Serving; Validating Experiences Within the Structures; Racialized Experiences Within the Structures; Academic Outcomes; Non-Academic Outcomes; and White Supremacy. Each of these areas includes several "indicators of serving" or metrics.

The Charge Moving Forward

UCF is one of sixteen Hispanic Serving Research Institutions (HSI and R1) in the country. We must continue to work towards becoming a Hispanic *thriving* institution and document our efforts and successes as contributions to HSI literature. Hispanic/Latino students are the largest, youngest, and fastest growing minoritized population in the U.S., and it is in the best interest of all to ensure that this critical mass of talent and future leaders are served to the best our ability. Let's continue to lean into spaces that examine what it means to serve, and let's each do our part.

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Faculty Struggles and Successes During the Transition to Remote Instruction in Spring 2020

Julie Donnelly

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It goes without saying that faculty in higher education across the globe experienced a sudden and forced paradigm shift in their approach to teaching in Spring 2020. While rethinking how we teach might otherwise be a positive exercise, this shift happened concurrently with a pandemic that up-ended both faculty and students' lives. Faculty had to navigate the rapid transition to remote instruction while taking into account obstacles their students were facing unexpectedly (relocation, loss of access to technology, changing family and work responsibilities, etc.) and while dealing with obstacles they were suddenly facing (caregiving, loss of access to technology, etc.).

UCF responded to this crisis on many fronts. With respect to continuing instruction, the Provost urged (but did not yet require) faculty to move their courses online for the remainder of the semester on March 9. Within a week, the Board of Governors moved all courses to remote instruction, Zoom was made available as a Canvas integration, and all non-essential employees were directed to work remotely. Shortly thereafter, students and faculty were notified that all courses would be taught remotely for the remainder of the semester.

During a crisis such as this, weaknesses in an organization come to the forefront (Roux-Dufort, 2007, p. 110). The organization has little time to assess the adequacy of its response. However, assessing the consequence of the response helps the organization grow (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). Rather than maintaining the hope that things will return to "normal," organizations can identify strengths in the response, interpret why certain things worked and others did not, and make long-term improvements to the organization based on this analysis (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). For organizational learning to be effective, it is essential to collect data on the response during or immediately following the crisis to avoid "hindsight bias" (Veil, 2011).

We (Faculty Center Interim Director Ann Miller, former Faculty Center post-docs Julie Donnelly and Masha Krsmanovic, and Chemistry Assistant Professor Erin Saitta) conducted focus group interviews with 43 faculty members from the Colleges of Sciences and Engineering and Computer Science along with key informants within the colleges and on the Keep Teaching Team (a collaborative effort within the Division of Digital Learning and the Faculty Center). Analysis of these interviews revealed common struggles and successes that may help UCF make long-term improvements to our approach to faculty support.

Struggles

Common struggles that faculty experienced during the crisis included difficulty maintaining academic integrity, continuing to engage and interact with students, ensuring access to technology for both them and their students, and dealing with increased workload and decreased quality of work life.

Academic Integrity

One of the biggest concerns among faculty that we talked to was academic integrity. Particularly in large enrollment courses, where multiple choice exams are common, faculty noticed a steep increase in average grades following the transition. Many did not want to introduce tools that could be used to prevent students from using outside resources on an exam due to students' ability to access the required technology to use these tools (e.g., specific browsers, webcams, etc.). Some faculty recognized that this highlights the need for faculty to explore different types of assessments for these courses.

Engagement and interaction with students

Faculty told us that attendance declined sharply following the transition as well. In fact, some lost track of students—reaching out to them, but never hearing back after the transition. For students who did continue to attend synchronous meetings, many would not use their webcams. Some faculty expressed concern about losing out on the ability to visually assess students' responses to the material being presented.

Technology

Access to technology was a challenge for faculty and students alike. Some faculty expressed frustration at the perceived assumption that they had what they needed to work at home. While some struggled with not having tools like document cameras or devices that would allow them to simulate a whiteboard, others had to use personal computers to work. Many were surprised at how reliant their students were on the computer labs on campus. Several reported that a significant number of students contacted them to say they no longer had access to a computer.

Workload

Faculty also discussed the challenges associated with the change in working conditions. They felt that their workload increased, citing a surge in e-mails following the transition

(particularly from concerned and confused students) along with the need to create content and assessments suitable for a new modality. On top of the increased workload, many faculty and members of the support team had to simultaneously care for children and/or other family members, which impacted the hours during which they could work. "Regular" work hours shifted to late nights for those who found themselves with new day-time responsibilities.

Successes

Of course, our faculty are resilient and sought and used resources to help them tackle these challenges. They cited their own experience and credentials, technical and instructional support, and relationships as their most valuable assets for navigating the crisis.

Experience and credentials

A major strength among faculty and the faculty support team was the fact that about 78% of the instructors of record in Spring 2020 were credentialed to teach online (via IDL6543 or a similar credentialing course through CDL). Key informants told us that even if faculty weren't teaching online in Spring 2020, having the core credential was a huge advantage. Faculty agreed. Those who had completed IDL6543 cited it and their experience teaching online as a significant strength during the transition.

Support from DDL Teams

For faculty who had not completed a credentialing course, or who had little to no experience teaching online, Webcourses support, the Pegasus Innovation Lab, Instructional Designers, Instructional Development team, and the Faculty Center were all cited as hugely helpful during the transition. They said they were able to get timely and effective help from these campus resources.

Relationships

A common theme contributing to the resilience of the instructional response to COVID-19 at UCF was personal and professional relationships. Key informants told us that existing collaborative relationships between team members helped keep the Keep Teaching team working highly efficiently. Faculty told us that colleagues on and off campus were some of their most valuable resources. For everyone, supportive family and friends helped manage workload by helping to take care of family members or just by being a sympathetic ear.

The faculty we spoke with were flexible, resilient, and obviously cared for their students' well-being and learning. Even considering the challenges they faced, they stepped up and looked for ways to continue to offer high quality instruction in Spring 2020. I have great admiration for them and for the support units that worked tirelessly to provide resources, ideas, and rapid help with any and all suddenly-remote-teaching challenges. Nonetheless, we have much to learn about faculty support as we continue to navigate this crisis and as we make long-term changes when our instructional lives begin to approach "normal" once again.

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Dogs, Cats and Underwear, or How We Survived the Online Transition
Sandra Sousa

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As we reached the end of what some qualify "the hardest (and weirdest) semester of our lives," I sat down to reflect on the preceding six weeks. I had left UCF a few days before Spring Break began to attend a conference in Boston and then fly from there to give a talk at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Even though there were already concerns of a virus spreading around, it did not cross my mind that I would come back to a different UCF. Even while I was waiting for my flight to depart from Milwaukee-Orlando and got a text message reporting that our university would be going fully online for the following two weeks, I thought, "Well, I can manage two weeks of language online, and then we will be back to normal. Not a big deal!" Wishful thinking, I now realize, comparable, most likely, to the seven–eight-year-old girl sitting next to me, who had never seen palm trees in her life and was going to vacation at World Disney (and then, not any longer).

As soon as I realized that the situation was not going back to "normal," I put on my "survival mode," which I thought was long gone since my days as a graduate student and would not be needed again. I had never taught a Portuguese class online in my nineteen years of teaching, but I told myself that it could not be such a bad thing, and worse things could happen to me. I think today that three main principles helped my class survive without (many) scratches, which I will develop further below: 1. Embrace organization and simplicity; 2. Roll with the punches (or, if we prefer, go with the flow); 3. Become something in-between a cheerleader and a general at war (a metaphor stolen from a fellow professor taking my class who wrote me at some point: "You are doing a great job rallying the troops").

I am not trying to say that my class was something like living in a perfect world, but depending on how we define perfection, I think my students were true warriors. The first class was a real disaster. I decided to try the "Conferences" tool on Webcourses, and students could barely hear me, I almost had no lungs from shouting, I could only see three students, and at the end of class, they were only able to say a couple of sentences in Portuguese each. I was exhausted, angry, frustrated, and overwhelmed, but hearing one student saying on the other side of the screen, "Sandra, it will get better, don't worry," and the others' confirming, gave me the light and strength to continue. I never gave up on my students before; it was not going to be now that a virus would defeat me! And so, I said to myself, "For a first time, it was actually not so bad (it was terrible!!). After all, they said *something*, which is better than nothing!" And I was happy again!

I decided to focus and see what could be done until the end of the semester. I come up with a plan. I prepared all my classes until the end of the semester using the concepts of simplicity and organization. I could no longer afford to make things fancy or complex. I sent students an email with everything that they needed to prepare for each class until the last one, with detailed information. That way, they knew what to expect, and they knew that class could work if they did what they were assigned. I must confess that I did not have high expectations, with all the mess surrounding the pandemic and the possibility of more excuses, that my students would conform and complete the assignments. I was ready to get mad at them even before the fact. They proved me wrong! I was totally shocked that in each class, they were actually working, and working more than when they saw me face to face. I still do not have an explanation for this fact. It was, nonetheless, real.

The second concept, "go with the flow," I believe draws naturally from the fact that given our situation combined with a lack of experience teaching language online, you have to have some flexibility and just "let some things go." Students

were showing up for class and doing their work; how could I be mad that some were with their computers in bed, having breakfast, that dogs and cats were passing by in front of the screen (and even introduced to the whole class!)? I could not believe my eyes when a girl bent down from her bed to go pick up a coffee that was on the floor and I saw her underwear… I almost said something, but then I thought that would be better not to raise attention to the fact. Hopefully, I was the only one who saw it. It was quick, no, no one else saw. Obviously, the next time I teach a synchronous class online, I will need to establish clearer rules. Nonetheless, this experience helped to consider what my rules should be.

The third concept was probably the one that took the most energy. I constantly (but taking care not to be overwhelming) motivate my students: I sent them messages of encouragement, made videos, wrote them letters, talked with them during the week and on the weekends, sent them ideas on what to do at home, motivated them to move and exercise, to dance, and to always keep on laughing.

At the end, one thing I was reassured of: if you do not give up on your students, they do not give up on you. They thank me, but it is I who must thank them. They asked me to keep on having class during the summer, and so we continue to fight these hard times, surviving together, by learning a language, like real troopers.

Excused Grades: How to Offer Students More Choices
David Head

David Head is Associate Lecturer in the history department. He is the author of *A Crisis of Peace: George Washington, the Newburgh Conspiracy, and the Fate of the American Revolution*, which was named a finalist for the 2020 George Washington Book Prize.

In the COVID spring of 2020 I stumbled on a feature in Webcourses' gradebook that I'm now using for an unexpected purpose: giving students more choices in their learning.

The feature is the "excused" grade, which tells the gradebook to ignore an assignment for a particular student while keeping the grades for everyone else. Enter "excused" or just "ex" and it's as if that assignment never existed for that student. In

this way, it's different from dropping the lowest grade for all students.

I first learned about the excused grade from my instructional designer, Aimee deNoyelles, when I asked for help making the final exam for my spring GEP classes optional. I didn't want to cancel the final exam, since some students no doubt counted on it to make up for a slow start. But I didn't want to require it either. That seemed excessive given how everyone struggled to cope in the disrupted semester. The excused grade works well for these extraordinary situations, and it allowed me to include the exam grade for students who wanted it and exclude the grade for students who didn't.

When summer arrived, I taught U.S. History from 1492 to 1877, and as I planned the course, I got to thinking. If excused grades could give students a choice on exams, what else could I use it for? What if, I thought, I gave students a choice of which discussion assignments to complete, not just once in response to a crisis, but by design throughout the semester? I decided to experiment and offer 2 topics per unit throughout the semester. Turns out, it worked—but not always how I expected.

I'd hoped that offering students a choice of topics would improve the quality of their work. Surely, if they had greater agency in what they completed, they would do better. Unfortunately, I don't have evidence that happened. I changed my grading scheme from prior semesters, so it is hard to compare one term to another in a systematic way. My impression, however, was that the students' posts were about the same as in the past.

Though disappointed, I did see a bright spot. Offering students a choice reduced the number of students who did not complete discussions at all. Here are the numbers. In Summer 2020, I taught 106 students and assigned 5 discussions (each of which had 2 choices, but there were still only 5 assignments total). That means there were 530 total submissions expected from students. Of those, 32 grades were 0s for assignments not completed. Or, about 6 percent of discussion assignments were never turned in.

Compare that to Summer 2019. I taught 49 students, assigned 5 discussions (with no choice in topics), for 245 expected submissions. There were 25 grades of 0 for missing work. That's 10 percent never turned in.

I'm continuing to offer students a choice my Fall 2020 classes, and through 2 units, 5.4 percent of grades are 0s for missing work.

Students who fail to turn in work are at the greatest danger for failing a course. If this trend continues, multiple discussion options will help keep the most vulnerable students above water.

At summer's end, I surveyed students on their thoughts about having 2 discussion options each unit. Of course, students preferred having a choice—who wouldn't?—but their comments showed that offering different options increased student interest in course materials and improved engagement overall.

When asked why they chose a particular topic, students again and again said they chose based on what appealed most to them. "I chose by what interested me most," one student said. "If I feel passionate or interested in something it will show in my writing."

"I made my decision on which topic I chose due to the prompt," another student reported. "Every time, one of the prompts held my interest more than the other." Other students commented similarly. "I chose whichever assignment I felt like I would enjoy more," said one, and another replied, "I personally chose the discussion I felt more connected to or passionate about."

Some students had a more instrumentalist approach. "Call me lazy," one said, "but I always opted for the easiest discussion for me to write about." Another apparently put in no effort at all. "Random topic pick," he replied. Still, most students mentioned some version of choosing a topic they found interesting.

The Student Perception of Instruction report backed up the survey's results. Some 75 percent of students responded that the course was "excellent" at "stimulating interest" (SPoI question 5), and based on the comments, a choice of discussion topics was certainly a part of that result.

Providing multiple discussion topics has its downsides. It takes a lot of time coming up with 2 questions for each unit instead of just 1. That wasn't a problem over the summer because I've taught the U.S. history survey dozens of times; I have plenty of material. This semester I'm teaching both halves of the Western Civilization survey, which I do less often, and as a result, I'm creating 11 new discussion questions between the 2 classes. It's a heavy load.

In addition, entering the excused grade is tedious. I type them by hand—EX, EX, EX, EX, EX—one after another after another. It's not too bad in a 50-person class. But in my 240-person U.S. history survey, I sometimes wonder if the EXs will ever end.

It may be possible to skip the EX and just leave a student with a "–" grade. But students tend to freak out if they see an incomplete item on their to-do list and panicked emails ensue. An excused grade signals that the assignment is accounted for.

My experiment has paid off. Despite the extra time, the benefits of offering multiple topics reduce missing assignments, appeal to students' interests, and foster engagement with course material. That's a win.

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Low-Bandwidth Teaching
Gail Humiston

Gail Sears Humiston is Associate Lecturer in the Department of Criminal Justice. She teaches the CJ Ethics Capstone course, Prosecution & Adjudication, and Criminal Justice Organizations. She was awarded a teaching program innovation grant from UCF's *What's Next* Quality Enhancement Plan in 2018 and TIP Award in 2020.

For years, UCF has been an innovative leader in online teaching (UCF, n.d.b). Yet, the age of COVID-19 has introduced new technological challenges to education. Notably, Zoom has been widely implemented in virtual classes to simulate traditional synchronous teaching methods.

Both on and off campus, educators, families, and students face major accessibility challenges to web-based and virtual learning platforms. Media headlines about buses being deployed with mobile hotspots remind us that not everyone has the resources needed for remote learning.

Even with full technology access, temporary failures seem inevitable, as in the case of power outages, dropped signals, microphone feedback, and the like. As recently as Labor Day this year, UCF's campus internet was disconnected due to a Distributed Denial of Service attack designed to cripple an organization's infrastructure by reducing bandwidth and disrupting connectivity.

If low incomes are related to barriers in accessing the technology needed for education, it is likely that a substantial portion of UCF undergraduates are experiencing these challenges. In 2019–20, 38% (22,142 of 58,821) of UCF's undergraduate students received Pell Grants (UCF, n.d.a). This suggests that nearly 40 percent of our undergraduates may be experiencing technology barriers to learning. These students would be more likely to have older computers and devices, limited data plans, and limited internet access speed and times.

One method of addressing technological barriers and facilitating access to online and remote learning is by employing low-bandwidth teaching methods.

Bandwidth
When referring to the internet, bandwidth refers to the amount of information or "bits" carried per second. Online activities such as video streaming require the most bandwidth (Fisher, 2020). Bandwidth varies according to an Internet Service Provider's (ISPs) services. Low bandwidth and slow internet speeds can cause webpages and videos to load slowly or fail to load.

Students who do not have internet services may rely on mobile hotspots to access courses. Access may become even less reliable since mobile hotspots typically rely on the user's smartphone or cellular tablet. The user's cell phone shares its mobile data plan with the devices connected to it. As a result, data caps become problematic, and unlimited data plans and mobile hotspot charges can be expensive.

Low-Bandwidth Teaching
Typically, remote teaching strategies are described as being synchronous or asynchronous. However, course planning may also incorporate low-bandwidth and high-bandwidth strategies and tools (Brown University, n.d.; Johnson, 2020; Stanford, 2020; University of Northern Iowa, n.d.).

In the case of virtual streaming courses, Zoom may be used in place of live classrooms. According to Daniel Stanford (2020), video conferencing with students to replicate the classroom experience online is attractive because it simulates the synchronous real-time activities of a live classroom.

However, synchronous video conferencing is problematic for several reasons. First, live video conferencing tools use high bandwidth. Students who do not have relatively new computers, fast and reliable internet, and unlimited data on their phones may struggle to succeed, feel stigmatized, or simply feel left out.

Second, by requiring live interactions, we lose the benefit of online learning, which is the flexibility of asynchronous learning. Asynchronous learners can complete courses in their own time, regardless of location. They are also more able to learn at their own pace.

Techniques for Low-Bandwidth Teaching
Daniel Stanford (2020) models four categories of teaching based on high- and low-level bandwidth technologies as they

relate to high- and low-immediate teaching methods. His "bandwidth immediacy matrix" depicts a clear analysis of the pros and cons of four zones of teaching technologies.

The first zone is dubbed the "green" zone. It uses low levels of bandwidth, and its demand for immediacy is also low. Stanford (2020) calls this the underappreciated workhorse. Lessons include sharing readings with text and images, discussions with text and images, and messages to students. Instructors' tools include the utilization of files, discussion boards, and emails. Most, if not all, students can receive outstanding instructional experiences if instructors rely heavily on green zone teaching methods and tools.

Second is the "blue" zone, which offers practical immediacy. These teaching technologies use low bandwidth while offering high immediacy. Lessons include collaborative documents and group chat messaging. Tools for implementation may include sharing documents through Microsoft Office 365 or Google Drive. Students can collaborate on documents, spreadsheets, or presentation slides. The Canvas Group Set capability allows students to use the discussion function to communicate between group members.

Third is the "yellow" zone with high-bandwidth and low-immediacy technologies. Class lectures and demonstrations can be provided by creating screencasts. Tools, such as Screencast-o-Matic and Panopto, allow teachers to pre-record videos of their screen and voice as they present PowerPoint slides, math calculations, drawings, and the like. Other methods include asynchronous discussions with video or audio.

Finally, Stanford (2020) characterizes the "red" zone as using technology to facilitate natural conversations, but at a cost. High-bandwidth requirements intersect with high-immediacy expectations to mimic the live classroom. Videoconferencing tools include Zoom or Skype, which allow teachers and students to engage with others in real time. Stanford emphasizes that videoconferencing is the "most inflexible and bandwidth-intensive" activity. It should be reserved for situations such as online office hours as a way of clearly communicating, avoiding misunderstandings, and feeling connected.

Conclusion

One way of ensuring diversity and inclusion at UCF is through the conscious examination of the technology used in our teaching. By designing online courses with a focus on asynchronous methods using lower bandwidth technologies, more students can meet course objectives regardless of financial or physical challenges. A lesson on analyzing data in an Excel sheet can be learned as readily through the low-bandwidth technologies of screenshots and text as compared to a high-bandwidth video. Academic integrity can be encouraged

through randomized questions bank, rather than ProctorHub videos.

As an instructor, I have been primarily employing the "Green" and "Blue" zones of teaching methods for several years. I design my own web-based courses, with three of them earning CDL's Quality Online Course badge last year.

My students consistently rate my online course organization very highly. My time is managed well with detailed course preparation, which in turn helps students to manage competing demands on their time and resources, as well as their diverse backgrounds and experiences.

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Excellent Adventure or Bogus Journey... we Face the Music
Alicia Duffy

Alicia Duffy is an Associate Instructor who teaches introductory US history. An Illinois native, Alicia's areas of interest are 19th- and 20th-century American history with an emphasis on Material and Labor history. She is the co-author of *Like a Mustard Seed*. She also ghost writes privately published corporate histories.

I am a tech junkie. I love reading daily newspapers on an iPad and I use a Kindle as much as possible. However, not in my classroom. I teach American history to general education students and never used technology: not a PowerPoint, not a film clip, nothing. (I relied on a chalkboard for emphasis until 2009 when UCF replaced them with whiteboards and Expo markers.)

Honestly, I was always proud of my tech-free classroom and my students liked it as well. Usually, a week or so into the course, I hear many comments about loving the *old school* way of teaching.

Covid-19 changed everything.

In just two short days, I was expected to convert my old school, hands on, walk & talk, improv loving class into a successful Zoom GEP course. Reminded of the scrambling NASA engineers and Apollo 13 astronauts, my first action was to lay out my personal tech and brainstorm what was absolutely necessary for student success.

First, to emphasize topics in a remote lecture, I knew I would need a whiteboard. My lectures and discussions are free-flowing, and I knew I would need a tool for jotting down notes. Focusing on my iPad and Apple pencil, I began researching whiteboard applications that worked with Zoom. (I know Zoom has a whiteboard, but I find it clunky to use.) After a couple of trials, I settled on the ShowMe app, which comes in a subscription or free version. I use the free version for iOS; it is also available for Android tablet users with a stylus. I learned that I could use ShowMe to mimic a plain whiteboard and clearly write in real time with the Apple pencil. The pencil is much easier than trying to write with a mouse or touchpad. It also shows in various colors, just like my old pack of Expo markers. If one prefers, ShowMe pages can be also pre-written and saved for each class. The iPad tablet also easily connects to Zoom using their Share feature.

My next question was, could we still improv through history? My classroom is quite engaging for a traditional lecture. I love active learning and frequently request students to act out historic scenes. I also bring in artifacts for students to hold or operate, giving them a better understanding of material history. While I could not replicate the tactile learning, Zoom did allow me to show the antiques. We even "used" the pieces in our classroom improv. It took a little imagination and definitely classroom participation, but we managed to convert a passive Zoom lecture into an active Zoom experience. As an example, we "played" the *Red Rover, Red Rover* game to simulate the events leading to the historic Haymarket Square Riot of 1886. Students in their Zoom squares pretended to link arms with classmates or crash through another's chain.

As the fall semester progresses, I continue to transform using tech. My intimate class of 50 is now held in a lecture hall seating 500. This requires me to once again rely on my trusted iPad and pencil. This time, however, I have pre-printed my Show Me pages and added some photos. I am also researching other whiteboard applications in a quest for the easiest to use.

I still reserve final judgement on if I will continue using technology after the pandemic has passed, but I at least know I will be prepared and confident if needed to make another instant change to remote teaching.

Blend, Don't Break: the UCF BlendFlex Model
Thomas Cavanagh
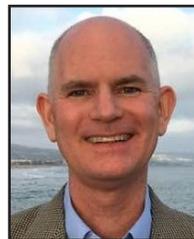
Thomas Cavanagh, Ph.D. is UCF's Vice Provost for Digital Learning. He oversees all distance learning strategy, policies, and practices and has been recognized with numerous awards from organizations such as the Online Learning Consortium, the United States Distance Learning Association, the IMS Global Learning Consortium, and the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technology. He is active in the higher education community and serves on a number of national advisory boards.

The preparations for the 2020 fall semester were different from those in any other year. During the summer of 2020, as the university followed the latest public health developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty and administration did their best to develop an instructional plan that would address a variety of needs, wants, and requirements for the upcoming fall term. One of the solutions that was developed was a unique pedagogical delivery model called Blend-Flex. Designed to be used in courses where all or part of the

instruction is delivered in a physical classroom setting, Blend-Flex provides one more option to faculty as they navigate an extremely complex educational landscape.

Background

As we were preparing for Fall 2020, we knew that there were a number of factors that all together made the context for this term extremely complex. First, we knew that we needed to maintain personal distancing guidelines within physical classrooms (COVID capacity). We would not have enough physical rooms to move all courses to larger spaces. Reducing enrollment to the new reduced room capacity was not desirable because we would only be able to serve a very small percentage of the students who registered for those classes (25%–30%). We knew that we did not want to create an instructional "class system" where some students received an in-person experience and some students only received a remote experience. It was also expected that in any given class, at any given point in the term, any number of students, or the faculty, may need to be remote for short or long durations.

In short, we needed to maintain maximum flexibility for instructional delivery. The more complex the context, the simpler the solution needed to be.

How It Works

For any typical instructional week, a BlendFlex class is split into smaller cohorts that meet physical distancing requirements in the assigned space. Students are only be permitted to attend one in-person class meeting per week. For example, in a class that typically has 100 students enrolled, 33 students would physically meet on Monday, 33 would meet on Wednesday, and 34 students would meet on Friday (see the illustration below). When not in a physical class, students would "attend" the balance of the weekly instruction remotely either synchronously (live) or asynchronously (through a recorded session).

A key point is that students cannot choose which day to attend in person—their only option is their assigned cohort day. Should students choose to not attend on their assigned day, that is their prerogative within faculty attendance requirements. For very large sections or those with a twice-per-week meeting schedule, students can be split into additional cohorts and limited to a once-per-every-other-week in-person meeting schedule (or other arrangements) in order to comply with physical distancing guidelines (similar to the CBA RA/REAL model).

A real-time video feed and/or a recording of each class session should be made available to those students not in the classroom on a given day. Faculty should record their Zoom/Panopto sessions (or work with the Office of Instructional Resources to set up Panopto's classroom-based auto-recording capability).

Advantages

One of the primary advantages of the BlendFlex model is that faculty can utilize the same syllabi and lesson planning as a typical face-to-face, lecture-based course (each cohort is a sub-part of the total course section). Planned pedagogy should not have to be significantly altered—only minor adjustments to classroom practice will be necessary (e.g., the use of the document camera instead of the physical whiteboard at the front of the room). Plus, the majority of classrooms are already equipped with the basic required technology, and most personal equipment (e.g., laptops) can be configured to work.

If faculty or students are unable to be on campus, or should the university be forced to transition again to a fully remote environment, the class can be easily moved to a fully remote delivery. In previous "HyFlex" implementations, increasing numbers of students tended to attend remotely, except where attendance was required by the faculty. This might actually be a positive development in an environment where we are trying to encourage physical distancing. Employing a BlendFlex approach as opposed to a HyFlex approach avoids putting faculty in the position of enforcing very limited seating capacities in context of the pandemic. Faculty already have enough on their collective plates without adding the role of enforcers of room capacity.
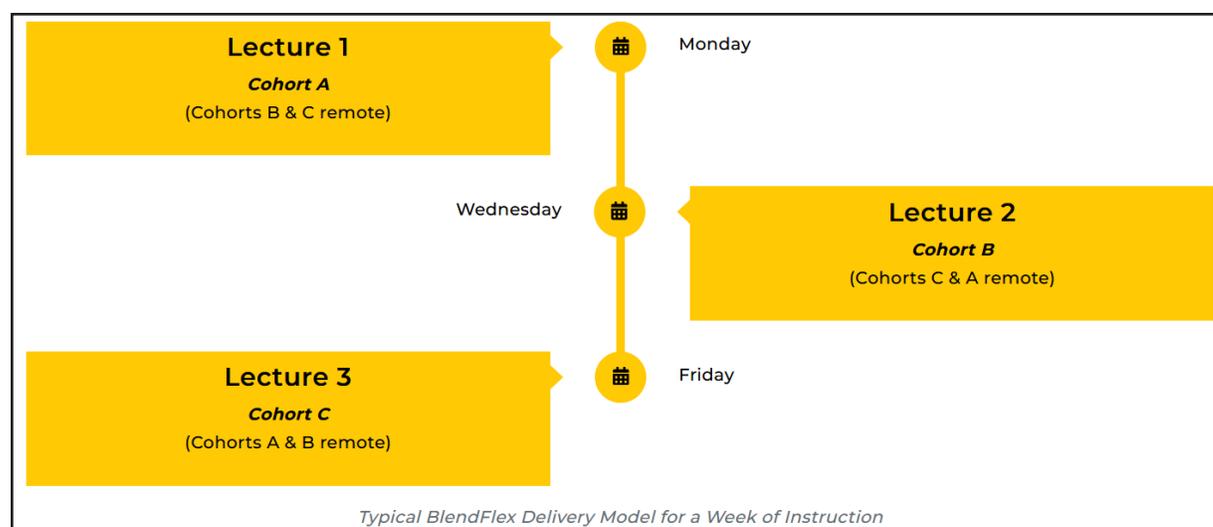
Typical BlendFlex Delivery Model for a Week of Instruction

Lecture 1 — Cohort A (Cohorts B & C remote) — Monday

Lecture 2 — Cohort B (Cohorts C & A remote) — Wednesday

Lecture 3 — Cohort C (Cohorts A & B remote) — Friday

If faculty wish to employ active learning strategies, online activities are suggested. Because personal distancing guidelines cannot be currently maintained in a typical face-to-face active learning session, online strategies can bridge the physical and virtual classrooms (although headphones will likely be required for online active learning that occurs within a physical classroom environment).

Limitations

Although the BlendFlex model has a number of advantages, it is not a panacea. Inherent in the approach are also several limitations. For example, lab sections and other courses that require psychomotor skills (e.g. performance-based) or specialized equipment may not work in this model due to their core face-to-face, physical requirements. Another limitation is that there are additional equipment and support costs to implement the BlendFlex model everywhere across the campus where it is needed.

Due to space constraints, especially in large sections, such as the REAL/RA courses in the College of Business, courses might have to limit student in-person experiences to only a couple of times for the entire term. Such courses might be better served being designed as fully remote. In addition, if a deaf or hard of hearing student registered with Student Accessibility Services is enrolled in the course, a workable captioning plan for that student needs to be devised.

Class content that requires in-person activities might benefit some students over others (e.g., in any given week, one particular group of students might benefit from an in-class activity while the rest must make do with a remote experience). As a result, faculty need to take care not to inadvertently disadvantage remote students by ensuring that each cohort has equally meaningful face-to-face experiences throughout the term.

Training

The Center for Distributed Learning and the Office of Instructional Resources have created an online, self-paced course that takes approximately one hour to complete. This course provides an overview of how the BlendFlex model is used at UCF, addresses questions faculty may have about its implementation, and identifies considerations in teaching practices. It also contains a helpful guide of tools, technologies, and strategies for applying this model in practice.

Evaluation and Next Steps

As with any new digital learning initiative at UCF, we will evaluate BlendFlex and assess its implementation, use, and success. We will then make adjustments as necessary according to the data. Although only about 10% of UCF's Fall 2020 student credit hours are in courses with face-to-face requirements, these courses represent approximately one-third of the total schedule. In addition, we estimate that about one-third of those courses with face-to-face requirements are using a BlendFlex delivery strategy. We will analyze the data from these sections, survey faculty and students, and determine recommendations for future adjustments. While the expectation is that the BlendFlex model is a temporary strategy to address the very particular challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, there are always opportunities to learn from experience and apply improvements to our regular digital learning practice.

For additional information and resources: https://digitallearning.ucf.edu/newsroom/keepteaching/blendflex-model/

BlendFlex through the Faculty Lens
Michael G. Strawser

Michael G. Strawser is Assistant Professor of Communication in the Nicholson School of Communication and Media. His primary research interests include instructional and organizational communication. Michael is also a Faculty Fellow at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. He is the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Faculty Development* and often presents on subjects surrounding teaching and learning.

Like Zoom, and Google before it, the term BlendFlex has become both a noun and a verb. Despite newfound interest in the BlendFlex delivery approach, it is hard to define what BlendFlex actually is. This is partly due to the extremely flexible and evolving nature of the model. To help alleviate this concern, this article serves as an overview of the Blend-Flex model from a faculty perspective.

For those who may not be familiar with the BlendFlex approach, its distinguishing feature is uber flexibility. Instead of confining students to either face-to-face or online course content, a BlendFlex model theoretically provides the best of all worlds, simultaneously allowing face-to-face, synchronous (real-time), and asynchronous student experiences. While we may be tempted to assume BlendFlex was created because of the COVID-19 pandemic, thankfully this is not the case. The strategy certainly is more prominent today but existed pre-coronavirus.

I believe it is helpful to look at BlendFlex by focusing on two of its distinguishing features, student choice and univer-

sal design, especially as they relate to more traditional course delivery: fully face-to-face, fully online, and hybrid/blended.

Student Choice
The BlendFlex model truly prioritizes student selection. In our more traditional instructional modes, the instructor would, typically, distinguish how, where, and in what capacity 'class' occurs. And, as a result, the student would follow along and complete assignments and content in one way. A BlendFlex model allows for synchronicity. Students can attend a face-to-face class, watch live at home, or watch later. Now, at UCF, like many other institutions, BlendFlex is distinguished from HyFlex.

At UCF, BlendFlex classes are cohort based. As CDL summarizes on their [What faculty need to know about BlendFlex](#) page, students in large classes are placed into cohorts with assigned face-to-face class days. This means students cannot choose to attend a different face-to-face day but can, with instructor permission and determinant of attendance policy, choose not to attend a physical, face-to-face session at all and just complete the course material virtually either live or later.

This HyFlex vs. BlendFlex distinction is important to note. Institutions like [Central Georgia Technical College](#) have designed BlendFlex courses for years to allow their students to take classes at different campuses across their university system. As originally conceived the concept was distinguished as HyFlex. Brian Beatty, who is credited with coining the phrase and the approach itself, believes choice is, and will always remain, the determining factor of a HyFlex or BlendFlex course—without choice, it ceases to be BlendFlex.

Our current situation, the new educational reality surrounding COVID-19, necessitates a BlendFlex choice without as much flexibility as a traditional HyFlex model. Students can still attend in person, live online, or virtually at a later time and date, but at UCF their face-to-face options are cohort-based and subsequently limited.

Universal Design
Because of the emphasis on student selection, BlendFlex, theoretically, can meet different learners 'where they are' and engage different preferences. Some students, because of COVID-related safety concerns or because of other situations, may prefer virtual content. Other students continue to thrive in a face-to-face setting and, after a semester/summer of all virtual offerings, may crave (and need) that in-person interaction again. Beatty provides four distinguishing features of the HyFlex model, all with the ability to expand universal design in our courses. For Beatty, student choice (as we already discussed) is the first distinguishing feature of the HyFlex or BlendFlex model. The other three differentiating

features include equivalency (i.e., equivalent learning activities in all participation modes), reusability (i.e., using artifacts from activities in each participation mode as learning objects for all), and accessibility (i.e., equipping students with skills, technology and otherwise, to appropriately access any of the participation modes). Ultimately, BlendFlex courses must utilize an equitable learning context for students, no matter their participation mode (face-to-face, online synchronous or asynchronous).

Student choice and the true potential for universal design set BlendFlex apart from other instructional modalities. Despite these two positive distinguishing characteristics, though, BlendFlex does have some limitations. For one, BlendFlex courses rely heavily on technology, specifically live video-conferencing or lecture capture tools. At UCF, the primary technologies we use are Panapto, for heavy lecture/large courses and Zoom for more discussion based courses. Ideally, the use of these technologies would be seamless. Realistically, though, using any educational technology can present challenges in terms of access, digital literacy, as well as ease of use. The heavy reliance on technology can create problems if the technology is not working correctly.

In addition, the hope is that instructional strategy would not change significantly as part of the appeal of BlendFlex is to offer an equitable learning experience for those who attend in any modality. However, BlendFlex courses take preparation and, as I'm sure many of you know, faculty may experience a significant amount of pressure as they try to navigate this new approach. Faculty need to think strategically about ensuring a student who attends face-to-face does not have a substantially more positive class experience than one who attends virtually.

Finally, as with all courses with content that occurs online, instructors have to make sure students are engaged and assessed appropriately. Again, this takes time and intentionality. Thankfully, at UCF, we are equipped with resources, like technology in our classrooms and instructional resources, that can help instructors overcome these BlendFlex limitations. If you have additional questions about BlendFlex learning, contact the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning or Center for Distributed Learning.

One final note about the BlendFlex/HyFlex delivery mode: Other than student learning, the BlendFlex end goal is flexibility. But remember, as you develop flexible learning environments that allow for student choice and universal design, consider whether the classroom experiences are equitable for all students no matter how they consume your course content. While BlendFlex may be considered less instructor-focused than other traditional course delivery models, because there is increased intentionality and planning involved, the mode

is exceptionally student-centered. It is important to note that as we wade into these BlendFlex waters we show ourselves, our students, and our institution a substantial amount of grace. Remember, if you have never made a mistake, you probably have never tried anything new.

The BlendFlex Model: Design and Teaching Tips
Aimee deNoyelles and Ashley Taylor

Aimee deNoyelles is a Senior Instructional Designer at the Center for Distributed Learning. Her role is to promote the quality of online instruction at UCF through faculty consultation, faculty development, and classroom-based research. She co-designed and developed the BlendFlex training course for faculty.

Ashley Taylor is a Lecturer for the School of Visual Arts and Design. She has taught courses in drawing, design, printmaking, and book arts. She is a practicing artist and freelance designer. Ashley is a member of the AIGA Orlando Community board and an Adobe Education Leader.

Introduction
In preparation for this most unpredictable Fall 2020 semester, a new word was added to the UCF online lexicon: BlendFlex. The top five points to know about BlendFlex are:

1. BlendFlex is intended for courses that have a face-to-face element.
2. BlendFlex is a delivery strategy, not a modality like P or M.
3. Face-to-face sessions are live-streamed and recorded for later online viewing.
4. Cohorts may be necessary if the student enrollment exceeds the physically distanced classroom capacity.
5. Even if cohorts are not necessary, you can choose to use this delivery strategy.

The BlendFlex model is being implemented in order to support students and teachers to continue their teaching and learning throughout the semester, whether in-person or remotely. However, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to courses that incorporate the BlendFlex model. It is intentionally designed to be flexible.

Faculty have access to several technologies that facilitate the BlendFlex model. Most classrooms are equipped with webcams, microphones, and document cameras. Panopto and Zoom are two technologies that address the need to live-stream and record classroom sessions for remote viewing. They are both robust and offer auto-captioning capabilities. If interaction with the remote audience is desired, then Zoom is the recommended technology to use. In all cases, Webcourses@UCF offers tools such as Announcements, Discussions, and Groups to facilitate social and cognitive presence within the learning community.

Some recommendations to design a course that incorporates the BlendFlex model include:

- Include language in your syllabus about what BlendFlex looks like in your particular course. Will there be cohorts? When are they expected to attend in person?
- Design the course with the thought of "100% remote" in the back of your mind. Offer activities online if you can, and have a back-up plan for activities that are face-to-face.
- Vary up the in-class activities. This is particularly important if cohorts are employed.
- Consider activities that can be completed by all students over the week, such as Polls, Discussions, and Peer Review.

Teaching with the BlendFlex Model: Ashley Taylor
This is my first time teaching ART3433C (Screen-printing). Screen-printing is a medium that relies on a print shop with access to equipment and materials. When the pandemic hit, I gave a lot of thought towards taking this course online but felt the students would feel too much burden of purchasing materials and having to set up a print space at home. For the fall semester, the course is being offered in the mixed-mode (M) modality, and the BlendFlex model is being used. Honestly, I love the model and am considering using it for this course from now on.

There are two ART3433C course sections of 25 students each. I wanted to limit the number of students attending the studio in-person at any one time, so I hold sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8–10 a.m., 10–12 p.m., 2–4 p.m., and 4–6 p.m. To make sure students are accessing the studio safely, I have used the tool Calendly to help schedule student access. This results in 6–7 students attending a 2-hour session to use the equipment. For example, Student A comes in on a Tuesday to work on their print, and they can choose to attend class via Zoom on Thursday. Students that opted to work completely remote were told on the first day of class that certain equipment was not going to be available for them, so the assignments would be modified. I provided alternative ways to screen print at home.

All online content is housed in Webcourses@UCF and is organized in weekly modules. Each week has a specific topic that is addressed using slideshows, video tutorials, reading, and discussions. Students engage in surveys, discussions, assignments, and projects. In the Discussions area, I post weekly check-ins, and students show pictures of their in-progress prints. It's great to get a peek into everyone's process and see how students respond to each other's prints. The John C. Hitt Library has provided us some great documentary resources. We recently watched a documentary on the history of the gig poster. The students loved it and found it very informative. They commented on its relationship to screen-printing in an online discussion.

Before students physically come to the studio, they watch videos in Webcourses@UCF that are about screen-printing, available through a YouTube playlist that I created. This is helpful because they can watch the instruction and prepare before coming to the studio. During class, Zoom is used for course introduction, critiques, check-ins and reflections. Some demonstrations are shown through Zoom so anyone remotely attending the session can watch along with those in-class. "Fly on the Wall Sessions" are offered for those working remotely due to quarantine, so they can see what everyone is doing in the studio. Zoom has also been used to host guest speakers from afar.

The most exciting part of this approach is that students are really pushing the limits of the assignments in exciting ways. Students are committed to the process and are excited to come to the studio to work on their prints. Not having to demonstrate everything in the in-person sessions gives them more free time on advanced projects. I have found that the reduced class seats provide more opportunity for one-on-one instruction and feedback. In just 6 weeks, the students have shown tremendous growth and a new confidence for making creative work. It is also heartening to see that students are working well within the physical limitations. Everyone is considerate, always looking out for one another, sanitizing their workstations, and social distancing.

Both the mixed-mode course design and the BlendFlex model have their unique challenges. The mixed-mode modality does require much more time to plan and create content. It is easy to fall into the rabbit hole of course design. For work/life balance, I need to set specific tasks to complete and set a time limit. It is also challenging to teach to students in-person as well as Zoom, so I usually indicate that the Zoom aspect is optional. The YouTube videos I mentioned earlier come in handy as an alternative, as I have a greater sense of control over camera angles and content.

Resources/Next Steps
There are several resources available to those interested in learning more about BlendFlex.

Faculty Development
- Enroll in the BlendFlex Faculty Training (self-paced, online): https://webcourses.ucf.edu/enroll/P4DJP3
- Zoom Essentials (self-paced, online): https://cdl.ucf.edu/teach/professional-development/zoom-essentials/
- Panopto Essentials (self-paced, online): https://cdl.ucf.edu/teach/professional-development/panopto-essentials/

Videos
- BlendFlex Delivery Model for Faculty: https://youtu.be/FbOZ-80b8GY
- BlendFlex Delivery Model for Students: https://youtu.be/3DTjFNQoFNo
- Student Tour of Panopto and Zoom: https://youtu.be/H_egmUn-u2Q
- The BlendFlex Classroom at UCF: https://youtu.be/ULFN_RAFJr0

UCF Services and Resources
- Webcourses@UCF Support—technical questions about Webcourses@UCF, Zoom, Panopto: https://cdl.ucf.edu/support
- Office of Instructional Resources—Classroom technology support: https://oir.ucf.edu/support/
- BlendFlex Classroom cheat sheet: https://digitallearning.ucf.edu/newsroom/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BlendFlexCheatSheet-AllCampuses-RevAug11.pdf
- John C. Hitt Subject Librarians: https://library.ucf.edu/subject/All/

Adapting Library Research to Online Instruction
Barry Mauer and John Venecek

Dr. Barry Jason Mauer is Associate Professor of English. His recent research is about citizen curating, which aims to bring ordinary people into the production of exhibits, both online and in public spaces. Mauer also publishes comics about delusion and denial, particularly as they affect politics.

John Venecek is a Humanities Librarian and is liaison to the departments of English, Art, Modern Languages, Texts & Technology, and Writing & Rhetoric. His primary areas of interest include open education, textbook affordability, and digital curation. Prior to arriving at UCF, John taught English for several years and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ekaterinburg, Russia where he established a foreign language library/resource center.

Before the COVID-19 coronavirus thrust everyone into the world of remote instruction, Barry Mauer (English) and John Venecek (Libraries) spent a year developing a series of research modules for literature courses that could be adapted to any instruction mode. The impetus behind this initiative was a decline in requests for library instruction sessions for upper-level humanities courses. We suspected this was due to an increased emphasis on hybrid, mixed-mode, and online instruction. The traditional library instruction model, often called the "one-shot" session, was less viable in this changing environment. One-shot sessions, or, more specifically, how to get beyond them so library instruction is not a mere add-on, is an ongoing issue that has proven difficult to overcome.

In the spring of 2019, John met with library liaisons, program coordinators, and department chairs throughout the humanities. The consensus from these meetings confirmed our suspicions: the variety of new instruction modes had reduced face-to-face class time, thereby making traditional library instruction less feasible. We needed a more flexible model that would capture the nuances of subject-specific research. In other words, nothing generic or automated. Such a model would satisfy the needs of upper-level humanities students and would help embed information literacy principles into the curriculum rather than treating them as an extension.

With these objectives in mind, we developed a series of literature research modules as a proof of concept. The key challenge was making them general enough to have widespread appeal while being tailored to literary research. We also wanted to incorporate the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy to promote research as inquiry to enhance students' critical thinking skills. We accomplished this by providing strategies for overcoming common barriers to research that undergraduates often encounter. By building on core concepts of the ACRL Framework, such as Scholarship as Conversation and Searching as Strategic Exploration, we could promote the idea of research as an active process and students as engaged contributors to their field.

We enlisted the assistance of Jada Reyes, an English major who had recently written a paper about James Baldwin's classic short story, "Sonny's Blues." We filmed a series of interviews with Jada discussing her struggles and successes to help make the modules more relatable to other English majors. For example, in Scholarship as Conversation, we discuss a common plight among young researchers: The Anxiety of Influence. This is "the fear of appearing as a mere imitator to a more established scholar. This fear often leads students to make the mistake of avoiding other texts because they believe it will influence them too much and thus will quash their original ideas." We emphasize that original ideas don't come from nowhere; they arise from our engagement with other texts.

The anxiety of influence often leads to the "hit and run" citation style in which students string together quotes with little context or analysis. Overcoming this anxiety is key to entering the scholarly conversation and is a core component of the ACRL's Framework, which states that authority is constructed and contextual: "Information resources reflect their creators' expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority. It is contextual in that the information need may help to determine the level of authority required." Recognizing how authority is constructed and contextualized by engaging with texts can help students go beyond merely stringing together quotes. Barry likened this approach to that of a museum curator or tour guide: "The curator is usually presenting other people's work but is doing so to make a point or share a point of view. The curator is responsible for knowing about the material and not misrepresenting it. The same is true for you as you write your paper." The key is for the researcher to decide what is significant and to fashion that into a convincing argument.

Jada's background growing up in the Bronx with a father who was an avid jazz fan added context to her analysis of "Sonny's Blues" and served as her entry into the scholarly discourse about Baldwin, class, and critical race theory. Her project was

a multi-layered conversation in which her background directed her research and added texture to her personal story and her analysis of Baldwin. This dialogue allowed her to establish the relevance of "Sonny's Blues" by raising contemporary questions about the impact of systematic racism and by celebrating the creativity and resilience of black culture, making the story relevant to a large audience so many years later. In this way, Jada provided a case study for how students can apply the principles of information literacy to their work and engage with texts in a way that allows them to make convincing arguments and establish relevance to a broader community of readers.

The modules were introduced during the spring semester, and we received the following feedback from students who used them:

> The section specifying "Overcoming the Anxiety of Influence" is a new concept for me that I believe will help me tremendously going forward for my research papers.

> The most important new strategy is regarding the scope of a review. . . The information provided from Michael Patton on "intellectual heritage," and common mistakes made when conducting a literature review, will prove to be very useful.

What seemed urgent when we undertook this project only became more so as we transitioned to remote learning this past spring. For that reason, we have made the course available for anyone to review and download in Canvas Commons by searching "Strategies for Conducting Inquiry-Based Literary Research" or "Barry Mauer." We also ask that you self-enroll in the sample course in Webcourses. If you decide to download the course, please let us know the results! We will continue to make improvements and hope it will help UCF students supercharge their research!

Submissions

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty members to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay. See the guidelines for submission online at <https://fctl.ucf.edu/teaching-resources/faculty-focus/>. Please send your submissions to fctl@ucf.edu.

The ideas and opinions expressed in the articles featured in the *Faculty Focus* belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Faculty Center or of UCF.

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