The Professional Development Online Taskforce

In 2016 The Santa Fe Online Taskforce formed two subcommittees to address matters of faculty professional development and online course design at the college. The Professional Development Online Taskforce Sub-Committee was charged with articulating critical competencies for online faculty and then designing training that would specifically address those competencies. Assessments to measure said competencies would also need to be developed before faculty could be approved to teach online. As the committee met over the course of the fall and spring semesters, three specific principles for online instruction were articulated: active learning, instructor presence, and feedback and interactions (see appendix 1). Guided by contemporary research, the committee defined each of these principles, listed activities that would exemplify these principles, and then identified online tools instructors might use to implement these principles.

It was decided that the next step would be to adapt those portions of CODI that covered the identified principles to self-paced, independent study modules that could be assigned to faculty. Each module would be an assessment designed to demonstrate instructor understanding and proficiency with the identified principle. A list of questions was drafted to help chairs or lead faculty assess instructor facilitation (see appendix 2). This list critical principles checklist be further revised and annotated with examples for chairs and lead faculty. Additionally, training on the critical principles checklist will be developed to facilitate its use by chairs and lead faculty.

**Initial recommendations of the committee:**

* New faculty with no online teaching experience will need to complete the CODI certification before teaching online.
* Department chairs will need to review faculty currently teaching online to ensure that their instruction shows evidence of the critical principles in their online class.
* Experienced online faculty who have not demonstrated one or more of the critical competencies in their online teaching will be required to work through one or more self-paced, independent study modules and submit a corresponding assignment.
* Chairs/lead faculty will need to be trained on evaluating online faculty using a specific rubrics or checklists.

Appendix 1:

Principles of Effective Online Instruction

1. **Active Learning**

* Develop numerous strategies to involve students in the active creation of course knowledge.
* Create and design learning activities that promote reflection and participation.
* Create activities and assessments that are varied and scaffolded.
* Give students the tools necessary for assessing their own mastery of the material.

**Example Activities/Practices:**

* Community Building
* Student Introductions
* Instructor Bios
* Team Building
* Collaborative learning
* Frequency and Elaboration
* Explicitly stated timetable for responses and participation
* Variety of Activities and Assessments
* Relevance to student lives and experiences
* Aligned with course learning outcomes
* Deliberate scaffolding

**Tools to Facilitate Active Learning**

(Instructors should develop proficiency with multiple tools from the list below.) :

* Announcements
* Discussion boards
* Piazza
* Canvas Chat
* Canvas Conversations
* Email
* Big Blue Button
* Zoom
* Skype
* Twitter
* Canvas groups
* Camtasia or other screen casting/ video editing apps

1. **Instructor Presence**

* Instructors should establish a clearly defined presence/persona through both the design of the course and its facilitation.
* Students should have a sense of the instructor through personal details shared as well as from the manner in which the course content has been curated.
* Announcements, emails, and other forms of communication should contribute to the sense of the instructor as an active participant in the learning process.
* Presence can be established through one-to-one or one-to-many forms of communication. A variety of media and LMS tools can be used to do this.

**Example Activities/Practices:**

* Introductory videos
* Synchronous webinars
* Recorded lectures
* Narrated PowerPoints
* Participation in discussion forums
* Regular class announcements
* Video conferences
* Virtual office hours
* Responding to the needs of the class

**Tools to Facilitate Instructor Presence**

(Instructors should develop proficiency with multiple tools from the list below.) :

* Announcements
* Discussion boards
* Piazza
* Canvas Chat
* Canvas Conversations
* Canvas Groups
* Email
* Big Blue Button
* Zoom
* Skype
* Twitter
* Camtasia

1. **Feedback and Interactions**

* Instructors should provide timely and specific feedback through multiple channels. Feedback can be delivered through the speed grader tool, quizzes, rubrics, Turnitin, and/or peer critiques.
* Timelines for grading and responses should be explicitly stated.
* Instructors should use tangible and targeted feedback to motivate students and support their learning by helping them identify their strengths and areas needing improvement.
* Instructors should create and maintain a community where students are easily able to interact with the instructor and with one another.
* Instructors should design interactions that clearly communicate high expectations that will contribute to the overall learning experience of the student.

**Example Activities/Practices:**

* Annotations are used in Speedgrader
* Instructor makes use of rubrics
* Canvas syllabus tool
* Calendar
* Regular course announcements
* Class groups are formed using Canvas Groups
* Peer evaluation
* Synchronous online sessions
* Online office hours
* Clear timeline for when students can expect feedback
* Backchannel for students is encouraged
* Assignment samples are provided.

**Tools to Facilitate Feedback and Interactions**

(Instructors should develop proficiency with multiple tools from the list below.) :

* Gradebook Maintenance
* Speedgrader
* Announcements
* Discussion boards
* Canvas Groups
* Piazza
* Canvas Chat
* Canvas Conversations
* Email
* Big Blue Button
* Zoom
* Skype
* Twitter

Appendix 2:

Critical Principles for Online Teaching

*This list would be used in conjunction with the design rubric to determine that a minimum standard is being met for online instruction at Santa Fe College.*

**Active Learning**

1. Instructor presents content in a variety of modes.
2. Students are invited to do more than simply memorize information.
3. Assessments are varied and entertain multiple acceptable submissions (i.e., all assessments are not multiple choice).
4. Students are provided opportunities to work with and interact with other students in the class.
5. Students are invited to reflect on the subject matter and apply personal insights and experiences.
6. Instructor does not solely rely on publisher content to present and assess material.
7. Directions for activities and assignments are clear and straightforward.
8. Assignments are effectively scaffolded.
9. Course activities and assignments clearly align with the course outcomes.
10. Instructor provides directions of effective meta-cognitive strategies for study and learning.

**Instructor Presence**

1. A welcome video or short instructor biography is provided.
2. Students have a clear and accurate idea of the instructor’s appearance and the sound of the instructor’s voice.
3. Students are given a sense of the instructor’s interests/personality.
4. Instructor actively participates in discussion posts.
5. Instructor’s participation in discussions is designed to further the discussion.
6. Instructor regularly checks into the online course.
7. A variety of tools are used to facilitate communication and interactions with students.
8. Instructor demonstrates familiarity with individual students in the course.
9. Instructor strives to be personable and approachable.
10. Instructor is accessible to students through a variety of means.

**Feedback and Interactions**

1. Instructor provides students with a clear policy on when feedback is provided and adheres to that policy.
2. Students are given the opportunity to revise submissions and resubmit work.
3. Instructor uses a variety of tools to provide student feedback.
4. Students are given sufficient direction and information to self-evaluate before submission of an assignment.
5. Instructor actively uses rubrics to aid in the assessment of class assignments.
6. Instructor uses a supportive and encouraging tone in the feedback they provide.
7. Instructor uses feedback to express high expectations
8. Instructor feedback emphasizes effort and time on task
9. Instructor feedback is given in a timely manner.
10. Instructor feedback is constructive and specific.