

OLC Blended Learning Symposium

2022 REPORT





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WELCOME LETTER

It was with great pleasure that I read the 2022 Report of the OLC Blended Learning Symposium. This report culminates a year plus of work in which a collaborative of educators dedicated themselves to studying blended learning as the pedagogical model of choice in higher education. It is not a surprise that the Online Learning Consortium should have undertaken this initiative since historically it has been the worldwide leader in promoting online education, including blended learning, for decades.

More than 20 years ago, in August 1999, a small group of grantees of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Anytime, Anyplace Learning Program met at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to discuss the latest developments in online learning. The entire two-day meeting was devoted to presenting the current nascent state of online learning and contemplating future directions. While not a topic on the agenda, a small, informal group of individuals from the University of Central Florida, the State University of New York and the City University of New York discussed the emerging activity of faculty who were blending and matching online and face-to-face to instruction. A common focus of these discussions was the need of

commuter students for whom geographic distance was not an issue with regard to in-person classes as much as the time involved in fitting classes into their incredibly busy days of working, taking care of families, and attending college classes. What started as a small discussion blossomed into a recognition that a new modality was emerging that would equal and surpass the fully online modality in the years ahead. By 2002, a community had developed that included a number of other colleges such as the University of Illinois in Chicago and the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. A grant proposal was submitted to the Sloan Foundation to sponsor a blended learning workshop. It was held in 2003 at the University of Illinois in Chicago and explored definitions and models that would give some substantive form to blended learning. At that time, there was little research on blended learning and a definition proved elusive. It took a small group of attendees nine months to agree on a working definition. The workshop became an annual event hosted by the University of Illinois in Chicago and later the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. In 2007, the Alfred P. Sloan Consortium (now OLC) published the first book of research on blended learning following the 2006 Sloan



Blended Learning Workshop.

The present OLC Report includes a plethora of information on blended learning themes such as instructional design, equity, evaluation, assessment, faculty support, and administrative challenges written by a group of international colleagues. The timing of this report could not be better as the world hopefully exits from the scourge of COVID. Prior to the pandemic, higher education was evolving into a “blended university” model where all aspects of teaching, learning, counseling, advising, and administration were becoming dependent upon online technology. An irreversible evolution in higher education has become for better or

for worse, fully enmeshed in the blended model.

I offer congratulations to the staff of OLC and all those who contributed their time and effort to producing this report. It is the beginning of a road map for our blended future which will depend upon a plethora of online and adaptive technologies including artificial intelligence, large-scale cloud computing, robotics, and biosensing interfaces.

Brava and Bravo!

Anthony G. Picciano

Professor, Hunter College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York



WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to the 2022 OLC Blended Learning Symposium report, a landmark initiative for setting the national teaching and learning agenda. The symposium was a response to the events of the past decade, such as an absence of a concerted blended learning program, the pandemic, flagging student interest in higher education, technology's explosive development, and pressures to reconsider what constitutes a responsive and effective university. Primarily, however, the symposium chronicled in this report is future-oriented, showing us that our long-held educational value systems need reconsideration. Yogi Berra said, "The future ain't what it used to be." This work is a metaphoric Rosetta Stone codifying ideas of the most forward-thinking and thoughtful educators in the blended learning space. The resources contained herein are rich, vast, and illuminating, showing that OLC is an unquestioned educational leader.

In reading the report, several things become apparent, one of which is that blending learning exhibits all the characteristics of a complex system; it is diverse, interdependent, connected, and adaptive. In the conclusion, you will find eight elements defining the process, each of which contributes to the grand design. However, because it is complex, blended learning is

emergent, being much more than the sum of its elements. To be sure, the individual facets are important in their own rite, but their interaction is what defines blended learning. Development comes from the bottom up and is self-organizing. That is why it has been so difficult to formulate a top-down definition.

One of the subtexts coming from the symposium is blending as a universal value for unifying a community of practice. From its early beginning in The Sloan Consortium through its many iterations in OLC, blending exemplifies a boundary object that brings us together but gives individual constituencies freedom to contextualize according to their unique environments. The report hinges on flexibility, model development, making assessment part of the learning process, the student voice, instructional and codesign, time, synchronicity, and integrated institutional strategies. From this work we learn that there are many ways to get it right and concentrating on best practices can mitigate the relevance of context. We are advised that the overriding foundation of blending is to embrace complexity and understand that the walls of the classroom have dissolved. Learning independently offline or online is no longer a viable concept. The report makes it clear that interaction among learning spaces and people is the new



blended paradigm. The possibilities are indeed exciting, but the challenges are formidable. As master Yoda teaches us, “Do or do not. There is no try.”

To everyone who contributed to this project: a job well done. You have captured where we have been, where we are, and the directions we might take. This work is a great service to all who care about the quality of learning opportunities in our shifting landscape. The resources available to us here are a treasure

trove of thought-provoking information, practical strategies, and innovative learning concepts. Thank you OLC for rekindling the blended learning conversation. Clearly there is much more to come. We may not know exactly where we are going but now, we have some excellent guideposts for the journey.

Chuck Dziuban

Director, Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness,
University of Central Florida

Inaugural Pegasus Professor and Professor Emeritus

Inaugural Collective Excellence Awardee

Coordinator, Harris Rosen Foundation Educational Programs,
College of Community Innovation and Education



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ABOUT THE ONLINE LEARNING CONSORTIUM



The [Online Learning Consortium \(OLC\)](https://onlinelearningconsortium.org) is a collaborative community of education leaders and innovators dedicated to advancing quality digital teaching and learning experiences designed to reach and engage the modern learner—anyone, anywhere, anytime. OLC inspires innovation and quality through an extensive set of resources, including best-practice publications, quality benchmarking, leading-edge instruction, community-driven conferences, practitioner-based and empirical research, and expert guidance. The growing OLC community includes faculty members, administrators, trainers, instructional designers, and other learning professionals, as well as educational institutions, professional societies, and corporate enterprises. Learn more at onlinelearningconsortium.org.





ABOUT THE BLENDED LEARNING SYMPOSIUM AND THIS REPORT

In November 2002, at the Sloan-C International Conference on Online Learning, a small group of higher education professionals were discussing a new phenomenon: faculty were mixing face-to-face and online learning instructional techniques in their courses. This new approach to teaching and learning was distinct from both fully F2F and online learning. Faculty members combined their own “blend” of preferred classroom technologies and a range of “on campus” meetings, ranging from once a week sessions to biweekly and monthly meetings. The first Sloan-C workshop on blended learning grew from this discussion and was launched the following year. Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, it was held in April 2003 at the University of Illinois-Chicago with roughly 30 in attendance. During the two day event, while attendees had difficulty agreeing on a unified definition of blended learning, they did agree that it was likely to significantly impact higher education and that more conversation and research was needed. This small community continued to grow with yearly Sloan-C Blended Learning workshops until the final event in 2015, which had roughly 600-700 attendees.

Since that time, blended learning has continued to be a vital topic at OLC conferences, in research featured in our flagship journal, the Online Learning Journal, and in offerings such as the Administration of Blended Programs Scorecard. However, the pandemic has fundamentally changed the landscape of higher education and accelerated the trend toward not just blended learning classes, but blended programs and institutions as well. In early 2021, Mary Niemiec, then OLC Board of Directors President, convened a Blended Learning Task Force to examine how OLC might expand its offerings to best serve the growing BL community. Chaired by Dr. Elizabeth Ciabocchi, the committee was formed by OLC Board Of Directors members and staff and OLC members at large who were experts in various aspects of blended learning. The 2022 Blended Learning Symposium (BLS) was launched based on the recommendations of that BL task force ([BLS Welcome Presentation, 2022](#)).

OLC Blended Learning Symposium

During the 2022 BLS at Accelerate in Orlando, Florida, an open call was made for

participants to contribute to a collaborative notes document that would capture the outcomes, topics, themes, and conversations that occurred during both the virtual and on-site BLS. This report is the outcome of these collaborative notes and is broadly intended to serve as a living memory of the BLS. The themes below arose from a collaborative coding process by which OLC staff and volunteer collaborators inductively coded the BLS and AC22 blended learning sessions along with archivist notes from the BLS to create major categories. Next, a participatory writing process was undertaken, and contributors to the archivist documents were subsequently invited to

co-author this report. Volunteer collaborators were divided into writing teams that produced this document during three full-day writing retreats and three weeks of asynchronous writing. The OLC community is incredibly grateful to the contributing authors for sharing their time and expertise to produce this report that highlights trends in blended learning. Their participation allows us to represent a range of perspectives as we capture the opportunities and challenges facing blended learning scholars and practitioners. In what follows, our contributing authors present eight trends that emerged during the symposium presentations and audience Q&As.





2022 BLENDED LEARNING SYMPOSIUM THEMES

Equity

Equity themes from both the BLS specifically and AC22 sessions more broadly included a focus on at-risk students and retention, inclusive teaching, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). [Jose Antonio Bowen's keynote](#) spoke to the theme of equity where one key principle discussed was to establish a clear communication policy with students. Bowen also spoke of moving from salience (relevance, worthwhileness, and meaning) to Engagement, Attention (competence, optimal challenge, and variety) to optimism, and from autonomy (choice and self-determination) to agency. Creating "shorter and better" assignments rather than large, imposing assignments can also support a more diverse learning audience. Students need more contact, not less. In terms of Attention, instructors need to build in a goal for competence, optimal challenges (those activities that are pleasantly frustrating), and variety. If something is too easy or hard, learners will quit. Courses need to create an optimistic tone – "you can do this." Optimism

is motivating. Additionally, Bowen noted that instructors should demonstrate that they care through practices such as:

- Providing an introduction video
- Learning names and pronouns
- Articulating difficulty
- Encouraging persistence
- Conducting pre-class surveys
- Arriving early and staying late
- Giving personal messages
- Asking for early feedback

[Kiran Budhrani](#) presented on "Designing Blended Learning Experiences" and shared how UNC Charlotte redesigned a gateway mathematics course. Budhrani discussed how UNC Charlotte did not rely heavily on online learning prior to the pandemic. This institution has about 35,000 students. Students experienced many challenges with math including:

- High failure rates in gateway math courses
- Not understanding the relevance for future careers

- Primary obstacle to degree completion and equitable outcomes for students

The goals for the redesigned Gateway Math courses were to reduce barriers to student success, such as:

- Decrease equity gaps
- Decrease DFW rates (20-30k)
- Increase student understanding of the relevance for career success
- Reduce time to degree

As a part of the design process, UNC Charlotte used codesign methods and tools: Personas, Visioning, and Strategy. While they

created a list of over 10 personas of students who could take a course, they focused on a small subset as the primary types of students who would take a course. The Design personas were used to enable empathy in designing the course. Sample personas included Academic Nomads, Adults, Anti-Education/Anti-Science, Art, Bandwagon, Communication Style Mismatch, High Performing, Humanities Averse, Humanities Majors, "Just Enough", Athletes, Veterans, Working Full Time. When designing with a persona in mind, designers used a chart (see figure 1) to help them design "for" this type of student.



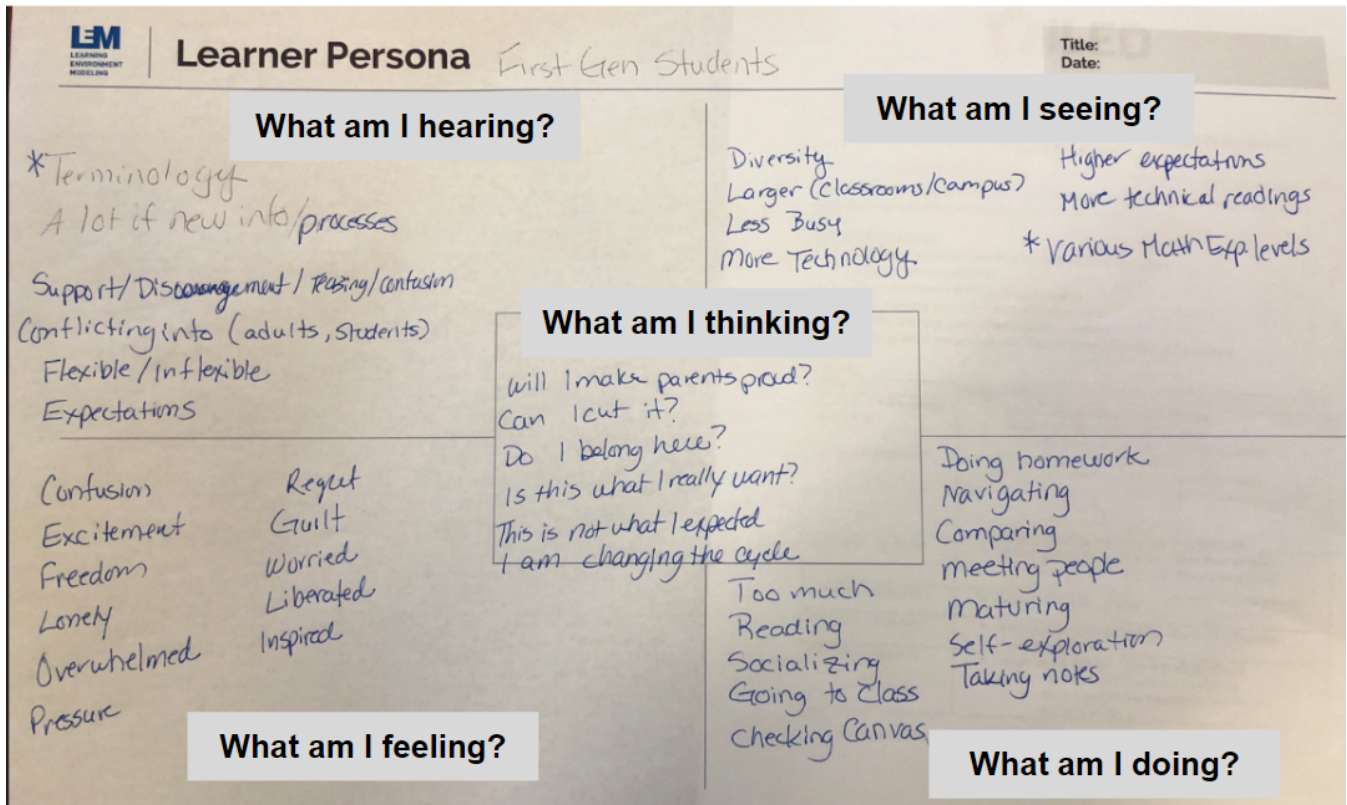


Figure 1. Learner Persona: First Generation Students

[Charles Graham and Tawnya Means](#) presented “Three Key Dimensions of Blended Learning Readiness in Higher Education”. They discussed institutional readiness, instructor readiness, and student readiness. As they poignantly noted: “If students aren’t prepared for blended learning, it won’t work – no matter how prepared the faculty and institution is.” They argued that many instruments used for assessing student readiness are flawed, and that a better practice would be to provide resources and guides to prepare students for diverse learning experiences.

Institutions can prepare themselves for students/learners from diverse backgrounds by designing student services for true blended experiences, developing clear course descriptions that explain modalities and expectations, building sufficient technology infrastructure, hiring enough support staff, developing a clear understanding and definitions of the continuum of blended learning, and intentionally designing courses for blended delivery and not just reduced seat-time.



Readiness

Blended learning can provide benefits to both instructors and students. However, to experience the benefits of blended learning benefits, the issue of readiness must be addressed. [Graham and Means \(2022\)](#) provide a framework for assessing readiness that establishes three dimensions of readiness: institutional, instructor and student. On the institutional front, a [helpful checklist](#) assesses the institution's provision of strategy, structure and support for blended learning. [Vick \(2022\)](#) suggests various strategies for balancing empowering faculty leaders as they design blended options while also attempting to steer them toward quality instructional design practices and programmatic cohesiveness, two areas they may not have experience with.

Many resources exist for supporting instructors in their blended learning readiness journey. For example, [Luxton's \(2022\)](#) Learning Experience Accelerator Program (LEAP) model, developed at Swinburne University, is a cohort-based program that includes four self-paced modules, three workshops, consultation, and assessment tasks that culminate in a Blended Course Design Plan.

Additionally, the [Learning Environment Modeling system](#) developed at the University of Central Oklahoma provides a set of tools to help faculty design blended learning courses and programs. [Budrahni and Dodd \(2002\)](#) provide an informative case study of applying the modeling system to create a development math program.

Regarding student readiness, [Dello Stritto, Aguiar, and Andrews \(2022\)](#) developed and validated an instrument to measure online learner readiness. They presented on the application of this instrument as a tool for: 1) learner self-assessment; 2) connecting students with resources and support services; and 3) helping student support coaches identify opportunities for students to further develop learning skills.



Course and Instructional Design

Zoom Session Learning Optimization

[Ronald Costello](#), manager of digital learning at AO North America, presented a session in OLC Accelerate titled “[How Much Zoom is Too Much Zoom? Striking the balance in blended courses.](#)” This session explored data gathered from various blended formats to try to better determine effectiveness of long Zoom sessions for synchronous online learning. The specific focus was on how to strike a balance between the convenience of lengthy Zoom sessions and the manageability of shorter sessions for students.

Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning

When campuses shut down in Spring 2020 and moved to Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL), many students and faculty mistakenly labeled the experience as online learning, assuming the expeditious shift of in-person courses to online delivery was how all online courses were developed. While there was some clarification around communication that needed to occur, there was also an opportunity to build on the experiences of faculty and students during this time for blended learning. A case study by UNC Charlotte for their Statistics I and II course found that conversations about blended learning design were more productive as students and faculty had

experienced learning at home and saw the possibilities of learning at home *and* in-class after the shift to ERTL.

Codesign

Key to the successful implementation of blended learning is recognizing the importance of engaging stakeholder groups early in the design process. In this session, [Kiran Budhrani](#) from the Center for Teaching and Learning at UNC Charlotte presented a session in the Blended Learning Symposium titled “[Designing Blended Learning Experiences.](#)” She reported on the codesign process used at her institution to balance the environment and the experience.

Methods used to support this process included creating partnerships, building personas, visioning the future of the environment for those personas, and focusing on the strategy.

The first step was building partnerships with stakeholders (including first faculty involved in a grant, then adding more faculty as the chancellor focused on student success as part of the Quality Enhancement Plan as part of strategic planning. The next step involved developing personas to enable empathy in design (who are our students? What are their plural identities?). This portion of the

codesign process was supported by a design canvas (link). These personas allowed for visioning sessions that led to the creation of an active and adaptive blended curriculum with these components:

- Intentional design of “learning at home” (what happens outside the classroom)
- Intentional design of “class time” (how to design meaningful in-class experiences)
- Modified textbooks with OER combined with projects with personal and social impact
- Reimagining student support (how to help students learn to learn in this modality)

Respect for Instructional Designers

Before the shift to emergency remote teaching in 2020, some institutions knew they needed instructional designers, largely to support online learning initiatives, but many had not invested in these roles. The shift to remote teaching led many institutions to more carefully consider the technological and pedagogical decisions behind modalities, which required the expertise of instructional designers. In turn, the [professionalization of the instructional design field accelerated during 2020](#) and beyond. Instructional designers not only became critical supporters of faculty and students for a variety of modalities, but they became key to institutional strategy setting.

Faculty became increasingly aware of the importance of an instructional designer’s expertise. José Antonio Bowen noted in his [keynote](#) at the Blended Learning Symposium that faculty “have more design features than ever before, but . . . are not designers.” There is an overwhelming sense of possibility afforded by learning technologies, which highlights the expertise of instructional designers and the significance of their role at institutions.

Not only were instructional designers now seen as more critical with regard to institutional strategy setting, they were also more visible when colleges and universities rapidly pivoted in spring 2020 and began offering all courses online. Faculty began to better understand the importance of instructional designers, who not only designed courses within every subject area but were also able to develop relationships with faculty members and administrators as they realized the importance of mobilizing technology and agile frameworks in designing courses and providing support for both faculty and students. Instructional designers were critical to the implementation of HyFlex and other flexible modalities.

HyFlex was one particular modality that gained increased attention as campuses began reopening in Fall 2020. The Hyflex approach drew upon many of the pedagogical strategies that instructional designers had been working on

pre-pandemic, including flipped learning and blended learning. Thus, instructional designers were frequently consulted for their expertise in intentional design choices around various modalities. Recognizing the possibilities of leveraging the expertise of instructional designers and technology, many universities developed initiatives to ensure they were not only prepared for future disruptions but would also be able to leverage lessons learned. For example, Swinburne University began moving to an institutional blended model as part of a 2021 mandate that blended learning would be the delivery mode for all in-person courses by 2025. This required a centralized blended learning team to be established as part of the pre-existing Learning Transformations Unit (a central L&T center). The Learning Experience team consisted of one learning experience manager and five learning experience designers. Although instructional designers have always been vital to university operations, they were more widely recognized as significant stakeholders in institutional strategy during the pandemic.

Microlearning (Videos, Sessions, Classes)

[Scott Collins](#) and [Renee Ford](#) presented a session entitled "[Transforming the Traditional Textbook Into Engaging Microlearning Videos.](#)" They shared that in today's curated-content world, we should develop course materials aimed at maximizing student engagement. This session introduced

participants to an active project aimed at developing affordable, customized, video-based microlearning course materials. The two primary goals were to increase student engagement and eventually replace the traditional textbook. In short videos of five minutes or less, they created a digital resource in the style of curated content that was scripted and had high production value. The videos were accessible on a variety of devices and used a conversational style to tell a story. Anecdotally, they reported that students watched more of the shorter videos than the original hour-long videos such that the cumulative time watched was more for the category of short videos. They reported a nominal increase in average student performance on assessments following the shorter videos.

[Melissa Hortman](#), from Medical University of South Carolina and an education industry executive at Microsoft, [Jennifer Lee](#), also an education industry executive at Microsoft, and [Jan Haugh](#) and Monika Dybalska from FeedbackFruits, presented a session called "[Leveraging Radical Creativity for The New Era of Hybrid Learning.](#)" This session reminded us that blended learning is a continuum of synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods for learning. They shared that while the power of feedback in teaching and learning is undeniable, it is challenging to facilitate effective feedback, especially in online and hybrid environments. They noted that educators face several

pedagogical challenges alongside finding scalable platforms for meaningful feedback. Their session encouraged learning about innovative teaching approaches through Microsoft Teams and the FeedbackFruits Tool Suite and explored potential future capabilities.

Blended STEM

[Jennifer Obando](#) and [Robert Chang](#) from Stevens Institute of Technology presented a session entitled “[Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion \(DEI\) and Social-Emotional Learning \(SEL\) in Action: Defining a Pathway for Broadening Access to and Engagement in a Blended Engineering Course.](#)” This session presented the results of integrating [Universal](#)

[Design for Learning, diversity equity and inclusion,](#) and [social emotional learning](#) strategies in a redesigned online upper-undergraduate, graduate-level engineering course. In this session, they reviewed their design strategy, demonstrated technologies used, presented preliminary data, reviewed lessons learned, and invited attendees to discuss the future of blended and online STEM education. Obando noted that Chang was concerned about students’ lack of interest, motivation, and low-quality submissions. They wanted to address the “[forgetting curve](#)” and help students retain information they had learned. They leveraged multiple frameworks and are continuing to collect and analyze data.





(Re)defining Blended Learning as a Model

As Graham (2021) and other researchers have noted, institutions customize or create models of blended learning because each institution must make strategic decisions about the model for blended learning that best serves their campus. Language that describes blended, hybrid, and hyflex can also be inconsistent because the term “blended learning” remains open to many interpretations, so finding a representative definition is a challenge. In looking back at earlier models, most blended structures emphasize themes such as breakdown of time, infrastructure needs, and the design of the online learning environment.

A model for blended learning needs to be holistic in nature and flexible in interpretation in order to meet the needs of all who wish to apply the model. The model needs to include strategic questions and decision points from all stakeholders,

including enrollment services, student support, faculty, students, information technology, and academic affairs. Such a model also needs to include questions for stakeholders to address that would remove barriers to student success, including access to technology, internet, and wellness support. Barriers to faculty success may include lack of training in blended pedagogy, lack of training in campus academic technologies, and lack of time to develop courses in a blended modality. Ideally, a thorough blended learning model encourages decisionmakers to look beyond the percentage of time learning in-person vs. online to address the many components involved in a successful blended experience for all. Further, institutions need to determine metrics for success and what data can be collected and analyzed to facilitate a continuous improvement approach.

Additional Resources

Graham, C. R. (2021). Exploring definitions, models, frameworks, and theory for blended learning research. In A. G. Picciano, C. D. Dziuban, C. R. Graham, & P. D. Moskal (Eds.), *Blended learning: Research perspectives, Volume 3*.

Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W., & Harrison, J. B. (2013). A framework for institutional adoption and implementation of blended learning in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education, 18* (3), 4–14.

Pulham, E. B., & Graham, C. R. (2018). Comparing K-12 online and blended teaching competencies: A literature review. *Distance Education, 39*(3), 411–432.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2018.1476840>





Evaluation, Assessment, Analytics

In “[Planning the Future by Examining the Past: Twenty-Five Years of Blended Learning Research](#),” Patsy Moskal reported on the journey that UCF has undergone by creating and providing blended learning opportunities for students. She also shared research supporting blended learning as a viable option, although she did pose the question of the effect of synchronous meetings on working students’ schedules. She encouraged attendees to collaborate and use the prolific data that is generated by the LMS, adaptive learning platform, student information

systems, etc. to regularly improve teaching and learning.

Charles Graham and Tawnya Means, in “[Three Dimensions of Blended Learning](#)” shared a blended learning framework with four pillars (see figure 2), one of which is Data Practices. They defined data practices as the ability to use digital tools to monitor student activity and performance in order to guide student growth and noted that it is a crucial pedagogical competency for readiness for teachers to implement blended teaching.

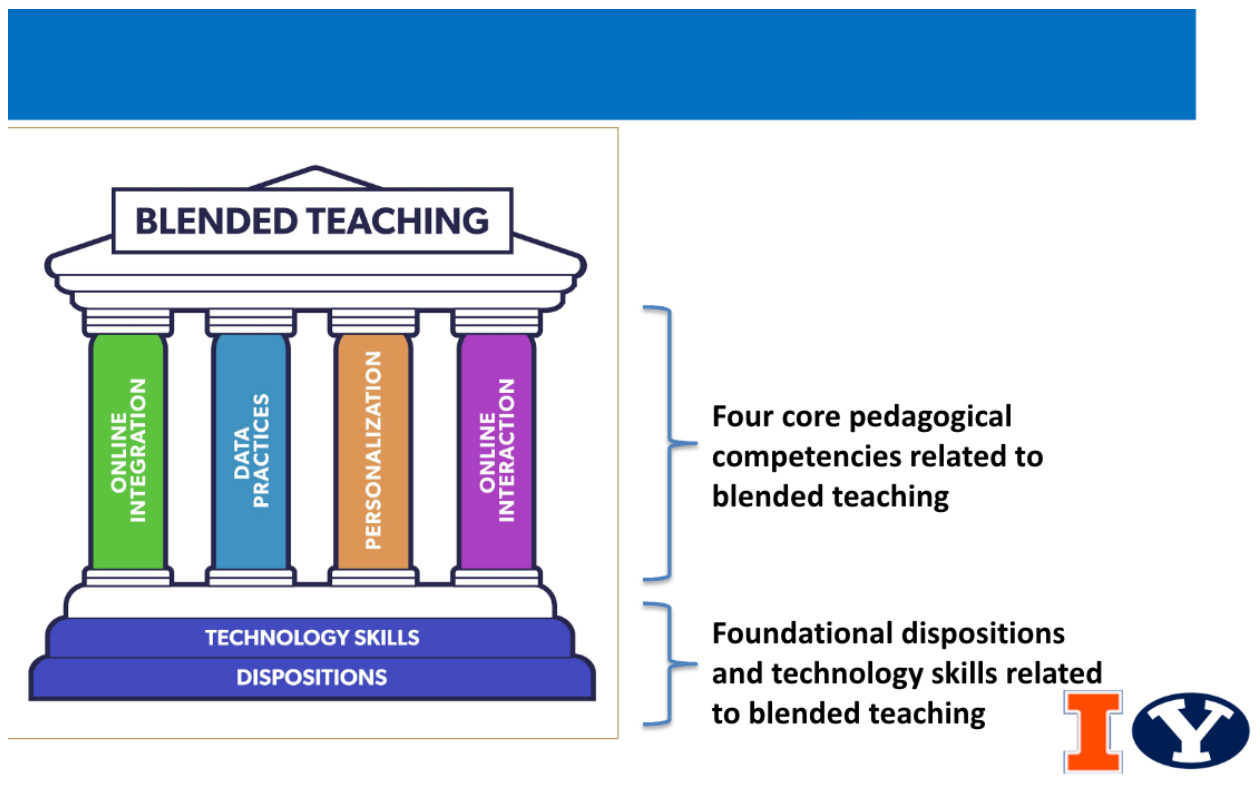


Figure 2. Four Pillars of Blended Teaching

Previously, Charles Graham asked the question, “How can learning analytics be used to understand if the number of blended and online courses affects student success rates?” This is a starting point for a study in learning analytics but can also be applied to academic analytics if additional data were collected as well. Learning analytics examines student performance whereas academic analytics evaluates class, program, and institutional data.

In “[Designing Blended Learning Experiences](#)”, Kirin Budhrani noted that the EDUCAUSE [Horizon Report Key Technologies and Influencers](#) (2021, 2022) identified Adaptive Learning, AI for Learning, Learning Analytics, and Artificial Intelligence as the top four topics associated with Blended Learning Influencers Globally.





Faculty Support and Burnout

Designing quality blended academic programs and courses can often require the input and leadership from higher education faculty and staff, like instructional designers, despite these design efforts not always directly relating to their roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, [Matt Vick](#) identified how administrative and program leadership can either incentivize, empower, or require faculty and staff to undertake this crucial work. Vick specifically argued that incentives can include “time and money,” like course releases and stipends, along with other more intrinsic incentives, like increased leadership opportunities, recognition, and a commitment to market the programs and courses that are designed. In implementing these incentives, faculty and staff were more empowered and better able to feel

ownership of their work. Further, Vick argued that it is important for faculty and staff to not just be involved with individual course design, but also be included in program building holistically. [Sandra Luxton and Tawnya Means](#) similarly presented on the benefits of empowerment over enforcement for blended design and implementation.

The World Health Organization [defined burnout in 2019](#) as a workplace syndrome characterized by feelings including exhaustion, negativism, cynicism, and reduced efficacy (2019). The lockdown necessitated a rapid deployment and proficiency of technology tools such as video conferencing and Learning Management Systems (LMS) for faculty. Many faculty were not familiar with those tools, and increased demand since the lockdown for continued use of these tools by students and leadership led to feelings of burnout for faculty and staff, including instructional designers who often supported large initiatives during emergency remote instruction. To address burnout in faculty and staff, many institutions offered a variety of support options. Effective support included forming Communities of Practice, offering work sessions with instructional designers or other specialists, asynchronous courses in the LMS for faculty in pedagogy and online tool training, and



cohorts of faculty working together and exploring new ideas for teaching in flexible environments. By providing options, faculty could choose the support that best fit their needs and available time and hopefully prevent any sense of being overwhelmed with more to do. Strategic decisions concerning the implementation of new technology or initiatives also addressed faculty burnout because this strategic rollout lessened the number of new expectations on

faculty to a more manageable load. Finding ways to support faculty in real-time, such as open hours to work in the LMS, calendar links to book time with instructional designers, or office hours with specialists also showed faculty that they were supported in their work.

Resources

Gist, S. & Wahl, L. (2022). *Instructional Design Summit - Part 1: Thrive, Don't Survive: Affective Labor, Id Burnout And Designing Your Work Life*. Accelerate 2022, Online Learning Consortium.

<https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/olc-accelerate-2022-session-page/?session=11495>

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<https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/olc-accelerate-2022-session-page/?session=12054>

Vick, M. (2022). *Blended Learning Symposium: Using Incentives And Empowerment To Drive Continuous Improvement In Blended Course Design*. Accelerate 2022, Online Learning Consortium.

<https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/olc-accelerate-2022-session-page/?session=1204>



Hyflex, ActiveFlex, and Student Choice

Hyflex Course Delivery

[Brian Beatty](#) developed the Hyflex model to provide students the agency to participate in a course in-person, or with at least one online option (synchronous and/or asynchronous). In the OLC Accelerate session entitled “[HyFlex Instructional Design: The Future of Education in the Post Pandemic Era](#),” [Kadriye Lewis](#) from Childrens Mercy Hospital, Department of Pediatrics at UMKC School of Medicine, explored the core design principles of Hyflex to illustrate the difference between online, blended, hybrid, and flipped learning in the context of the core elements of each modality.

[Rachel Stern-Lockerman](#), Joshua Barnes, and Andrew Farrell from CUNY, Queens College presented a session called “[Building Hyflex Programs through Crossfunctional Collaboration](#).” They noted that the advantages of a HyFlex modality became apparent through the COVID-19 pandemic, but continue to raise questions on training and implementing the modality properly. Their session outlined the aforementioned components of creating a HyFlex environment, as well as the experience specifically within their institution regarding its implementation, successes, and challenges.

ActiveFlex

[Mark Gale](#) and [Joy Oettel](#) from Athens State University presented a session entitled “[ActiveFlex: Allowing Student Access and Choice without Sacrificing Engagement and Collaboration](#),” where they discussed their use of the term “ActiveFlex” for their delivery mode that improves upon the HyFlex model by engaging all students in active learning and collaboration regardless of their method of attendance.

Student Choice

In Brian Beatty’s session in [June 2022](#) titled “HyFlex as a Blended Approach to Teaching and Learning,” he shared that HyFlex teaching and learning has been practiced for more than 15 years in some institutions, though most institutions using some form of HyFlex have only recently started paying attention to research about effectiveness and larger implementation factors. Many institutions are beginning beyond the simple descriptive methods seen for more than a decade and are starting to look at the impact of HyFlex approaches on longstanding issues of access, quality, and equity for all students and groups. He reported that students appreciated being able to make a choice about their modality. However, he also noted that there was data that showed that some students did not like making choices about

modality, but valued being able to work at their own pace.

In the Accelerate 2022 [keynote](#) in Orlando, “Blended and Included,” [José Antonio Bowen](#) shared his observations about the role autonomy plays as an intrinsic motivator. He tied it to his experiences learning to play tennis and related the ball hitting the net (feedback) to the choice to keep trying. Bowen also aligned the idea of relevance to encourage students to make the choice to learn because they found what they were learning to be connected to what they need. In particular, he suggested that stories can help make connections to encourage students to choose to learn. He shared that better feedback gives students agency, and good feedback is objective, trustworthy, not judgemental, specific and actionable. At best, it is immediate and timely.

Simultaneous Asynchronous and Synchronous, Onsite and Online Teaching

[Daphne King](#), [Evelyn Tomaszewski](#), and [Terri Ann Guingab](#) from George Mason University presented a session at OLC Accelerate titled “[What Can We Learn from HyFlex Teaching? Engaging Online and On Campus Students in Bichronous Environments.](#)” In this session,

they reported that from 2020-2021, Social Work at George Mason University committed to creating lively, active classroom engagement while adhering to safety precautions. With enrollments too large to bring all students on campus at once, the presenters modified [evidence-based HyFlex strategies](#) to teach in a [bichronous format](#), with students participating both on campus and simultaneously synchronously online.

Workforce Skills and Transition from Campus

[Timothy Loatman](#) and [Rebecca Anderson](#) (Collegis Education) and [Eric Lloyd](#) (Denison University) presented a session at OLC Accelerate titled “[Expanding the Hyflex Footprint: How Denison University's DENISON EDGE is Taking Education From the Campus to the Workforce.](#)” In their session, they reported on Denison University's collaborative multi-modality project, Denison Edge. This project is leveraging Hyflex coursework alongside their face-to-face courses to serve local learners as well as create an expanded pedagogical footprint. This presentation shared the journey to provide in-demand skills to learners who are looking to upskill or reskill in a multi-modality strategy.



Administrative and Institutional Challenges and Opportunities

Collective Buy-In, Adoption, and Advocacy For Institutions, Administrators, Faculty, Staff, and Students

Gaining sustainable buy-in and adoption of blended learning can be challenging as an institution seeks to balance flexible ways of achieving learning outcomes within administrative systems and structures. [Matt Vick](#) noted the role that incentives play in supporting faculty in the development of blended learning courses. Incentives ranged from course release, overload stipend, summer stipend, or as a requirement to teach online. Sometimes the “honor” of teaching in an online environment is an incentive that doesn’t require funding as instructors may desire the flexibility this offers or perhaps the guaranteed enrollment in certain courses. Incentives for departments are important as well to ensure the faculty member is not alone in their efforts and that the adoption was sustainable. A sustainable program should have consistent design, since if faculty act as “independent contractors,” consistency in design will be challenging to achieve.

In the [June 2022 webinar](#), Norman Vaughn identified another important element of successful buy-in, which is to demonstrate outcomes of the modality to leadership and

external stakeholders. These include student learning outcomes but also outcomes relevant to the institution, accreditor, and state or federal funding. This level of buy-in is key in order to continue the funding and support of blended learning.

Institutional Blended Strategy

While an organic approach to the development of blended courses and programs is sometimes necessary, developing a strategy at the institutional level provides helpful structures that are essential for creating successful, scalable results. A gap analysis is often a good place to start when developing a strategy. [Graham and Means \(2022\)](#) include a [helpful checklist](#) that can be used to structure the analysis. The checklist identifies at which stage an institution is in three distinct areas: strategy, structure and support for blended learning. It includes three stages of adoption: awareness and exploration (stage 1), adoption and early implementation (stage 2), and mature implementation and growth (stage 3). Graham and Means’ checklist emphasizes how important institutional readiness is to support students: there needs to be well developed student support services accessible both online and onsite, sufficient support staff to provide students with timely

assistance, and an institutional culture of blended learning to maximize the affordances of all learning modalities.

One issue that must be considered when developing a strategy and/or selecting a model for blended learning at an institution is the definitions of modes of instruction the institution has in place. Brian Beatty noted in the [June 2022 webinar](#) that institutions sometimes have 10+ course codes and that this creates administrative challenges from supporting a variety of modalities to reporting information externally on students and courses. Faculty and students then, too, are faced with the challenges of navigating the various definitions and expectations.

[Patsy Moskal](#) and [Jose Antonio Bowen](#) noted in their sessions the challenges of course codes that are not overly complicated and how that is important for students to have appropriate expectations. Helping courses be “student ready” requires institutions to develop uncomplicated common descriptions for course modality and delivery.

As discussed in the [Equity section](#), [UNC Charlotte](#) developed sample learner personas when designing online courses. This would appear to also be applicable for institutional blended strategies. They brainstormed a list of possible common student personas such as Academic Nomads, Adults Students, Anti-Education/Anti-Science

Students, Arts students, Bandwagon Students, “Just Enough” Students, Student Athletes, Veterans, or students working full time. Designers and instructors would choose a few key personas to then focus on during design to provide an empathetic lens. As entire programs are designed or redesigned for blended instruction, these personas may also be an important method of viewing the course and program design through empathetic student “eyes.”

In their presentation, [Foote \(2022\)](#) discussed how first generation students are sometimes considered a separate persona in design settings, yet they are often embedded within the personas listed above. This intersectionality of personas adds complexity to developing strategies and models for blended learning. For this reason, considering Foote’s approach to developing belonging for first generation students may be useful when developing strategies and models for blended learning. [Foote \(2022\)](#) frames discussion of developing a sense of belonging for first generation students with Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model. The model posits cultural capital, aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, resistant capital and linguistic capital develop community cultural wealth that can also be considered when developing models for blended course and program development.



CONCLUSION

The 2022 Blended Learning Symposium was a celebration of the OLC's 20 years of leadership in the field of blended learning. The 2022 BLS and this report show a renewed focus on blended learning in higher education since the last dedicated conference on blended learning in 2015. The eight core themes that emerged from the 2022 BLS during the collaborative writing process are summarized in the figure below.

While this is not an exhaustive list of the important topics and conversations that emerged during both the BLS and AC22, we hope it provides a useful tool for those working in the field of blended learning. In

particular, we hope that this report will serve as a living memory of the 2022 BLS and spark further conversation around these themes in scholarship, research, and conference presentations. It is interesting to note that our themes have shifted beyond an exclusive focus on learning management and course design to questions that span all modalities of instruction, such as readiness and burnout. It seems that our conversation is moving beyond a focus on facilitation of blended learning to an emphasis on making blended learning accessible to all. In particular, the theme of equity warrants additional consideration as we seek to support all learners effectively.

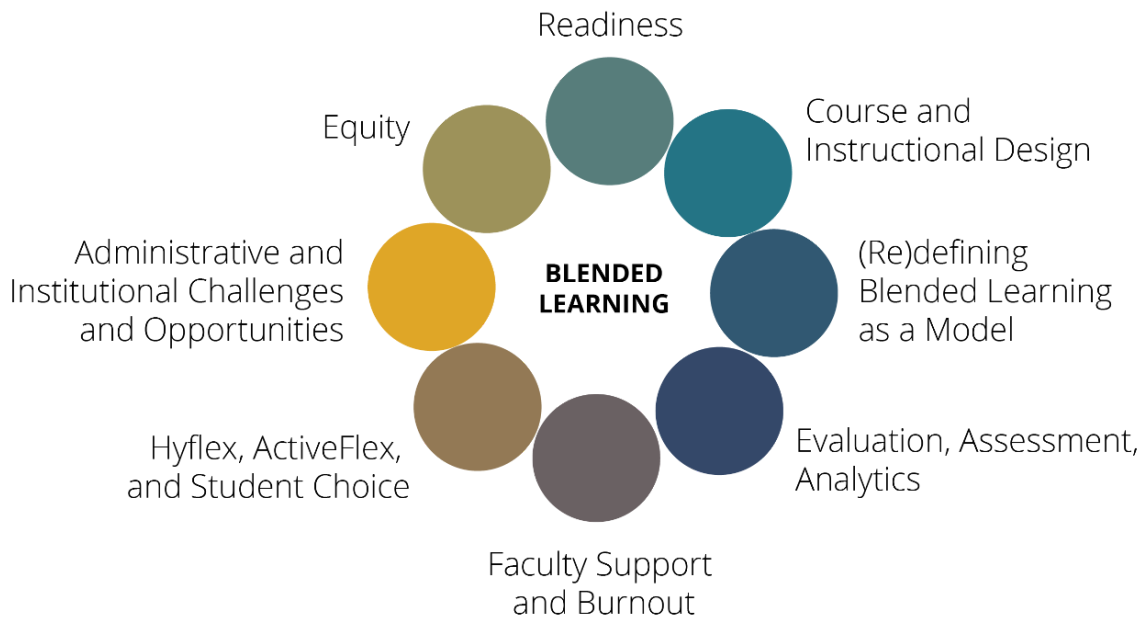


Figure 3. Eight Core Blended Learning Themes

As educators continue to recover from the pandemic, we also need to better understand and respond to faculty and administrator burnout. While the challenges we face are considerable, blended learning practitioners have a unique opportunity to leverage the moment of increased buy-in that has

accompanied the pandemic to shape the future of quality blended learning. We hope this report will help drive these conversations about what is next for the field, as we anticipate emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities facing online learners and educators.



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