

## **All Aboard!** **Getting Faculty Mobilized for Emergency Online Teaching**

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*Abstract: The 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic forced faculty members at institutions of higher learning across the world into teaching online in about 2 weeks. This reflective essay describes steps taken by business school faculty in a U.S. Midwestern midsized regional university to assist other faculty in the school in making this rapid transition to 100% online teaching. These steps include the development of an online course template within the university's course management system, made available to all faculty with tips and video tutorials specifically tailored to business courses. Many tenure-track professors and full-time instructors, who were required to complete extensive training prior to teaching online courses, were relatively well prepared. Despite this training, some felt overwhelmed when the pandemic forced an immediate transition online, and adjunct instructors and some junior faculty were particularly affected. Consistent with the conservation of resources theory, which suggests that individuals conserve their limited resources (e.g., time, money, etc.) to ensure availability when they are most needed, many instructors, particularly adjunct and junior faculty, were constrained by competing demands and less likely to have the resources to attend the requisite training for online teaching. Adjunct instructors often teach a small number of courses while maintaining full-time employment in their respective fields, and junior faculty must also expend resources on service and publishing demands. The availability of a special online course helped these vulnerable faculty members make the rapid transition to emergency online teaching. This reflective essay also describes the results of a survey about this transition among both faculty and the university's center for teaching and learning (CTL) staff. Last, we recommend strategies for CTLs and academic departments to prepare for future crises, for example, "deputizing" power users in each academic unit to redistribute workloads during emergencies and sharing tips and tricks customized for their departments. Creating annual online training modules is another strategy to allow seamless transition to unexpected online teaching.*

*Keywords: emergency transition, online learning, faculty development, teaching in crisis.*

Many of us recall being in early elementary school, walking into a classroom a few grades higher, and feeling completely confused and overwhelmed. The emergency transition to online learning (ETOL) that accompanied the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in 2020 contributed to many faculty members feeling just as overwhelmed and confused. An ETOL is the partial or complete transition of academic offerings from a traditional in-person or hybrid learning model to a fully online learning environment due to an exigent crisis event (e.g., inclement weather, community or pandemic outbreak of illness, disaster, or a national, state, or local emergency). In the past, emergencies such as

Hurricane Katrina did not lead to a massive transition to online teaching—mainly because online teaching was not as technologically possible as it is today. Moreover, Hurricane Katrina and similar natural disasters were somewhat localized geographically.

Once shunned by many elite academic institutions, online learning has grown into a mainstream delivery mode, providing education to students around the globe (Zlateva, 2019). With the rapid rise in online classes over the past 20 years, it seemed a natural move to transition to online teaching amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the rapid rise in online teaching across the world, many academics had never taught online and were highly resistant to even the idea of online teaching.

Normally, when faculty members teach online for the first time, they are often required, or at least strongly encouraged, to complete available training offered by their university (Chiasson, Terras, & Smart, 2015; Lion & Stark, 2010) that can last anywhere from several months to a full academic year. However, the 2020 ETOL forced faculty members to prepare to transition fully online within a week or two. This transition applied to faculty already teaching online, faculty who were resistant to online teaching, junior faculty new to teaching, and adjunct faculty. The ETOL was especially stressful to those faculty members, such as adjuncts or junior professors, who were new to teaching in higher education. The ETOL also had an impact on centers for teaching and learning (CTLs), responsible for training faculty to teach online, as they experienced a sudden and sharp increase in workload.

## **The Problem**

The COVID-19 pandemic is easily conceptualized as a crisis. A crisis is defined as any event producing a significant imbalance between environmental demands and the response capability of a person or organization (McGrath, 1970). Crises differ from daily stressors in their rarity, magnitude, and disruptive capacity, creating the need to alter other areas of life or occupation to contend with the situation (Russell, 2011). The mass spread of the coronavirus caused hundreds of thousands of infections and tens of thousands of deaths in a matter of weeks. Nations around the globe closed their borders, restricted inbound and outbound travel, closed all nonessential businesses, closed schools, and required people to socially distance from one another to control the spread of the disease.

Crisis events can create fundamental disruption to organizations (Weick, 1987). Some disruptions require immediate intervention to avoid a complete failure of the organization. The 2020 pandemic completely disrupted education globally, including higher education. Most institutions suspended classes or extended spring break and transitioned to 100% online course delivery to stop the spread of coronavirus among students. Moving classes online in such a short period of time provided a huge challenge that most institutions and their faculty were ill-prepared to tackle.

Certain groups of faculty were also particularly vulnerable during the transition, including junior and adjunct faculty. Junior faculty are untenured and typically have little teaching experience. To obtain tenure, many are focused on their research agendas—presenting research and publishing articles as well as developing research grants. These faculty are frequently encouraged to prioritize research over their teaching or service responsibilities (Rawat & Meena, 2014; Smith, 2017). In many cases, these junior faculty have received little in the way of faculty development in relation to teaching and may be unfamiliar with their new institution's learning management system (LMS). Adjunct faculty are in an equally vulnerable position. Many have a full-time job in addition to their teaching responsibilities for the university. Some adjunct faculty may be teaching multiple courses, frequently at different universities. Few receive compensation for attaining additional training in online teaching (Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010).

In the case of both junior and adjunct faculty, online training is frequently available, but these groups are less likely to participate in such faculty development due to competing demands on their

time. Meixner and colleagues (2010) found that nearly 75% of adjunct faculty did not attend initial faculty development sessions. Consistent with conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobföll, 1989, 2000), junior and adjunct faculty are less likely to pursue faculty development as a result of limited resources. COR theory addresses the circumstances associated with, and consequences of, stress. The theory predicts that resource loss is the principal ingredient in the stress-burnout process. Resources can be conceptualized as falling into four basic categories: objects (e.g., home, car, savings, etc.), conditions (e.g., one's health, job security, etc.), personal characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, sociability, etc.), and energies (e.g., money, social networks, credit, etc.). COR theory suggests that limited resources (e.g., time, money, social support, etc.) are valued and conserved to ensure availability when they are most needed. Both junior and adjunct faculty are expected to be effective teachers while being less likely to have the resources to attend the requisite training for online teaching.

The lack of resources impacts faculty beyond those who are considered junior and adjunct. CTLs, especially on regional or smaller campuses, are underfunded, understaffed, and underutilized. This lack of resources decreases the availability of faculty (professional) development in online teaching, leaving many professors with little or no online teaching support. Many faculty, in fact, are hesitant to teach online because of the lack of support, assistance, and training (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Chiasson et al., 2015; Mills, Yanes, & Casebeer, 2009).

At some institutions, limited resources can make it difficult for CTLs to spread the word about services they offer. In some cases, there can be a lack of perceived support even if the support is available. Faculty may be unaware of the types of services their CTL provides or may not even know there is a CTL on campus. In analyzing barriers to teaching at two different universities, Thanaraj and Williams (2016) found that “lack of sign posting of support and tools” was a barrier. Faculty reported a lack of technological support for online learning, even though their university had a full department dedicated to supporting it (Mills et al., 2009).

Even for a campus with a CTL that is well funded and visible, an ETOL can be overwhelming. As a way of gauging the level of stress created by the COVID-19 ETOL, we distributed a survey to all CTL staff within our university, requesting a list of the stressful aspects of the transition to 100% online teaching. One CTL staff member responded, “Lots of competing interests and lack of clear communication....” Another noted challenges to “ensure that we’re offering the support faculty need, and that we’re utilizing all our resources effectively.” Other staff members identified time-constraint concerns, including “competition for time and attention between too many online meetings...too many requested consultations...[leading to CTL staff having] reduced capacity for attention and reduced stamina in this highly stressful environment and schedule.”

In situations where a CTL is overburdened, it can be helpful to have faculty well versed in the tools offered by a CTL, sometimes known as “power users,” so these faculty members can share best practices with their colleagues. We asked CTL staff, “What factors assisted you in dealing with the transition to all online teaching?” One staff member simply responded, “power users.” This can be helpful since power users not only know how to use the technology but are experienced in how to apply technology to the unique needs within their disciplines. This sentiment was revealed in the survey responses, noting that those “having taught extensively online previously” and those with “prior experience with online teaching and learning” were helpful in dealing with the transition to all online teaching.

## **Making the Transition**

By January 20, 2020, the first U.S. case of COVID-19 was reported in Washington state. By the 1st week of March 2020, campuses across the United States were planning for a complete ETOL. At our university, spring break was extended by an additional week to allow faculty to prepare for the

transition. Two weeks later, faculty from our entire university, including all regional campuses, resumed classes completely online.

Even for faculty with online teaching experience, this was a stressful transition. Preparing to teach an online course is more labor intensive than teaching an in-person course (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Chiasson, et al., 2015; Mills et al., 2009; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). Getting an in-person course online in 2 weeks, given the well-documented high front-end workload of online courses, was a difficult task. The transition was even more difficult for those who had never taught online before—they had to learn best online practices, learn how to use new tools, and master unfamiliar components of the LMS on top of transitioning all courses online.

This was echoed in our survey results. In addition to providing a survey to all CTL staff at our university, we also surveyed faculty in our university. When asked about challenges faculty faced with the ETOL, one faculty member described a “lack of familiarity with software shortcomings and glitches to effectively troubleshoot for myself and [my] students.” Another faculty member stated, “Online teaching requires both more work to get started (which affected the two courses I had never taught online before) and much more work to grade. While I teach online frequently, it is much more work prepping [an online course]...and more work grading every time I teach it.”

To assist those who had never taught online before, one faculty member within the School of Business created a course shell within the LMS containing recommendations, tips and tricks, and technology workarounds (commonly known as “hacks”) that were designed to be a “just the facts, ma’am” approach to quickly preparing faculty to teach online. A second faculty member joined this effort once both realized the hours-long duplication of effort they had put forth researching and locating software solutions for security in online assessment.

### **Creating Our Own Canvas Learning Community Within Our School**

Many faculty at our institution have some level of online training and experience teaching online. Indeed, just over half (55%) of faculty on our campus had received some level of training in online course preparation and delivery before the COVID-19 crisis. Full-time faculty on our campus (tenure-track and instructors) were 2.7 times more likely to attend professional development in online learning than part-time faculty before the COVID-19 crisis.

Conversely, adjunct faculty on our campus were less likely to have online teaching training and experience. This faculty group generally teaches one or two classes each semester or academic year while working other full-time jobs. Also, adjunct faculty generally receive a flat fee per course each semester, so there is less financial incentive for them to attend additional professional development training. Scheduling constraints can also require this instructor group to pick up classes at the last minute, leaving little time to invest in additional work.

Junior faculty also have less time to attend professional development for online teaching and learning. On our campus, this faculty group faces requirements in service, research, and new course preparation while navigating their new school and learning how to use Canvas, our LMS. The high cost of training faculty also limits the ability of our university and individual schools to provide all faculty with financial or other incentives to attend additional professional development training. Simply put, many faculty on our campus, like on many other campuses, do not have the resources to engage in training for online course development and delivery.

When the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, each of the authors in their respective roles within the university felt the need to find the most efficient way to assist faculty in the ETOL while consuming the fewest resources. Of equal importance was maintaining quality in course delivery and following best practices in online learning while helping reduce the workload of our CTL staff in the Institute for Learning and Teaching Excellence. Our solution was to create a course shell that was used as a

public Canvas learning community space customized for the faculty in our school. This space initially provided suggestions and recommendations for faculty making a quick transition online during the ETOL.

We launched the course shell and added faculty as students. As questions flooded in from faculty, we expanded the offerings in the shell to include tips and tricks for facilitating teaching online. As we discovered other faculty's expertise, knowledge, and access to resources in areas such as setting up a home studio for recording lectures or using tools such as Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor, tools for managing quizzes and exams on Canvas, we incorporated this information into the learning space. Our initial effort to provide useful information during the early stages of the ETOL evolved into a clearing house of information designed to eliminate redundancy, reduce duplication of effort, provide a wealth of information in one place, and lower the overall learning curve for all faculty in our school. Although our target audience with this course shell was our colleagues in the School of Business, we were asked to share the course shell with all the deans on our campus.

This approach accomplished several best practices identified in the literature. Sharing tips and tricks with other faculty members is important, especially faculty within the same discipline (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008; Thanaraj & Williams, 2016) as different concepts may require unique delivery methods. In fact, one recommendation for future research by Chiasson et al. (2015) was "to explore institutional support for online teaching by faculty who are in varied fields of study" (p. 238). The creation of a single space for faculty within the same discipline to share ideas and resources also helped create social support and social presence for faculty who were learning how to teach online for the first time (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). Furthermore, many faculty prefer working independently using asynchronous modules (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008) and such modules are a cost-effective way to prepare faculty to teach online (Lion & Stark, 2010). Aldemir and Ardley (2014) argued that universities should give full-time faculty members release time to mentor new faculty members. In today's financial environment, that may not be feasible. However, the creation of online modules is a more cost-effective solution to one-on-one mentoring. Taylor and McQuiggan (2008) found that when it comes to training faculty to teach online, there is no "one size fits all" approach. In their study, faculty recommended that those preparing to teach online should have access to technical advice, instructional design, and colleagues experienced in online teaching:

Faculty indicated that the most helpful aspects of professional development events related to teaching online included opportunities to share real-life experiences with their colleagues, to use various technologies including the university's course management system, and to access specific examples and strategies" (p. 34).

Our course shell contained all of these helpful aspects suggested in Taylor and McQuiggan (2008).

### **Our Canvas Learning Space**

One immediate problem that was addressed through our Canvas community learning space was the issue of online assessment and ensuring the integrity of online exams. We recommended that faculty consider authentic assessments where possible and limit virtual monitoring of exams to those situations that necessitated it. We linked recommendations for creating authentic assessment in online courses to facilitate instructors' use of this assessment method. For faculty who required proctored exams, we provided a detailed tutorial for virtual monitoring. Monitoring during exams may be necessary to maintain consistency with licensing exams that students may take in the future. For

instance, in business, accounting students will sit for the Certified Public Accountant exam. In addition, finance students may sit for the Series 7 exam for prospective investment advisers/stockbrokers or the Certified Financial Planner exam upon graduation. Other disciplines, such as law or nursing, may also face this dilemma.

Although our campus already had an agreement with Examity, an online proctoring tool, faculty were worried that the software would quickly become overloaded due to the ETOL. Two of the authors had used Respondus Monitor and LockDown Browser at previous institutions and determined if our institution supported these tools. This first step was crucial because we wanted to determine accessibility and privacy of the software before giving students access. Our second step was to create a brief video tutorial on using Respondus Monitor and LockDown Browser, walking through key functions of the programs step-by-step via a screen share on the video conferencing tool Zoom. In this video tutorial, we first showed faculty how to activate LockDown Browser in Canvas. Next, we illustrated how to activate LockDown Browser and Monitor for quizzes and exams within Canvas.

After showing faculty how to install and activate LockDown Browser and Monitor, we discussed the start-up sequence within Monitor and urged faculty to leave all of the default options (webcam check, additional instructions, guidelines and tips, student photo, show ID, environment check, and facial detection check) activated until they had decided which ones they wanted to keep. We also encouraged faculty to add themselves as demo students and showed them how to do so. Having faculty set up a demo student account allowed them to take a quiz as a student in Canvas to familiarize themselves with the different parts of the start-up sequence, providing a much more robust real student experience than the Canvas student view. We also recommended that faculty activate facial detection, which notifies instructors when a student is out-of-frame.

The next step was to show faculty how to review the video recordings generated by Monitor. We reviewed the summary page generated by Monitor that details the number of students who completed the quiz as well as those flagged as high, medium, or low priority based on the amount of time their faces were not in their camera frame. Next, we demonstrated how to review results for individual students. This was a very important step because when faculty first hear about Monitor, their initial reaction is usually “I don’t have time to watch all of those videos!” However, in our Monitor tutorial, we showed faculty that viewing all the student recordings is not essential, since Monitor generates screenshots of students at various intervals during their quiz. This sampling process reduces the chances of a student problem being missed, allowing the faculty member to review only the thumbnails to look for any instances where a student is not looking at the screen. If any are found, we recommended examining that portion of the video in more detail to determine the reason the student was looking away from the screen. Viewing the entire exam footage is only necessary when you see unusual behavior that may prompt initiation of disciplinary action. We also demonstrated how to review the environment check video. The environment check ensures the students’ workspace during the exam is free of outside resources. In our tutorial, the faculty member who took the quiz as a practice student completed the environment check too quickly. We explained that this frequently happens with students and encouraged faculty to contact students who do not complete the environment check properly to clarify the expectations of the environment check.

After we walked faculty through how to use LockDown Browser and Monitor, we discussed some of the potential pitfalls that may arise as well as best practices to follow. We explained that LockDown Browser is a separate web browser that prevents the computer from accessing the internet or other programs during quizzes or exams. We cautioned faculty to have all of the needed information embedded in the exam since LockDown Browser prevents documents from being opened during a quiz. LockDown Browser allows exceptions to open external content, and we provided a short tutorial to guide faculty through this process. We also explained that materials must be accessed through a stationary link in order to provide access to all students.

One best practice that we described is the creation of an extremely easy, light-hearted practice quiz to allow students to familiarize themselves with LockDown Browser and Monitor without worrying about their performance on the quiz. There is a learning curve for students and faculty, and this learning curve can be stressful. The practice quiz allows students to overcome the learning curve of the new software before the stress of an exam. We encouraged instructors to review the results of the practice quiz before assigning a real quiz or exam. This allows the instructor to uncover any issues (such as a student completing an environment check too quickly) and work with the student to resolve those issues before an actual assessment is given.

Finally, a video tutorial that was initially created for students was shared on the Canvas learning community page. One common issue was that students did not realize that Respondus LockDown Browser is a separate, unique web browser they use to enter Canvas and access exams. When this tool is activated on an exam, the students are informed they need to download the actual LockDown Browser, particularly if they try to access the exam through a different browser such as Chrome or Edge. Canvas provides a link to download LockDown Browser prior to testing. Frequently however, students would download and install LockDown Browser and then try to access the Canvas quiz through a Chrome or Edge browser. In the video tutorial, we walked students through how to install LockDown Browser and explained that quizzes must be accessed via the LockDown Browser. We also explained that background applications (such as Zoom) cannot run while in LockDown Browser.

We also had a section of our Canvas course dedicated to demonstrating different techniques and methods for working problems on the whiteboard in Zoom. This issue was very important to several departments within our school. In accounting, instructors often illustrate how to work problems by writing T accounts and journal entries on the board. A T account is an accounting method to track the balance in an account, in which increases in the account value are added to one side of the "T" and decreases are added to the other to compute the ending balance in the account. In finance, drawing a cash-flow timeline is important, especially for complex time-value-of-money problems. Being able to draw on a whiteboard during class is extremely important in economics where instructors explain concepts such as supply and demand shifts with drawings. In fact, many economics professors keep their own supply of colored markers to illustrate scenarios with multiple supply and demand shifts across multiple graphs, such as a competitive price searcher market in disequilibrium.

We created video tutorials to show multiple ways to work problems using the whiteboard function in Zoom. We illustrated three different Zoom whiteboard techniques. The first demonstrates drawing with a mouse. Unfortunately, this method often results in low-quality handwriting/drawings. We also demonstrated using the touchscreen on a computer, producing slightly better results. The third technique involved the use of a graphics tablet. The downside of this method is that it requires the faculty member to purchase a graphics tablet. We discussed the advantages of using tablets, including neater handwriting and instructor flexibility in teaching. At a price of \$60, this tool can be cost prohibitive for some faculty, especially adjuncts.

Because purchasing additional equipment may create a financial barrier for some faculty, we also created a video on how to use Easy Canvas, an application specific to the iPad. At a price of \$15, this application is a more affordable option than purchasing a graphics tablet for those who already own an iPad and results in similar advantages to those of the graphics tablet. This application allows the user to connect an iPad to a computer using a standard USB cable. Once the iPad is connected, the user can use the iPad to write on a Zoom whiteboard.

Finally, we created a video tutorial on the use of document cameras. We demonstrated how a document camera can be used to graphically illustrate concepts by inserting a blank white sheet of paper into a plastic binder sleeve (a one-gallon freezer bag will work in a pinch). The plastic binder sleeve allows a faculty member to draw using the same dry erase markers and erasers that would be used on a traditional whiteboard. These drawings can be projected into a Zoom meeting using the

document camera. Document cameras automatically flip the projection so that it is not reversed on students' computer screens.

Other sections of the collaborative learning space included bare-bones, quick-use suggestions for getting started in Canvas. Here we addressed some basic functions and tools within Canvas to prepare faculty for an easier transition to online learning, such as loading and linking files, creating assignments and exams, and student/faculty interaction standards for our institution. We also added a page about using new tools in Canvas (e.g., Rich Content Editor and new quizzes) with short video tutorials on how to enable these tools. In addition, we had a section addressing synchronous communication, which covered how to set up Zoom, having alternative meeting spaces readily available, and recording to the cloud. This section was designed to help faculty easily begin using conferencing tools. The content we provided could be quickly copied, modified, and used to provide students with the same information in a faculty member's course. A page with links to accessibility statements and privacy policies for many of the tools faculty use in teaching online was also provided. This information reduces duplication of effort among faculty in our school trying to locate the same information for each of their online courses. A summary of the questions we faced during the transition, the hardware and software used to answer these questions, and a description of what we did to answer these questions is provided in Table 1.

As our email boxes filled up with questions and suggestions, we found our collaborative learning space the perfect place to share tips and suggestions from faculty who discovered effective practices and workarounds. Thus, we created a page to host other faculty tips for collaborative learning, reducing duplicate efforts of faculty who require solutions to common problems.



**Table 1. Summary of issues and recommended solutions.**

Question	Hardware/software used	What we did
How can we ensure academic integrity of online assessments?	Respondus Monitor and LockDown Browser	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Determined if software was supported by the university. This step is critical to ensure accessibility and privacy.</li> <li>2) Recommended an initial light-hearted practice or formative quiz to acclimate students to the software.</li> <li>3) Recommended that faculty use a demo student account to get acclimated to the software.</li> <li>4) Provided written instructions and a step-by-step video regarding how to activate Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor in our Canvas and how to activate them for exams.</li> <li>5) Described quiz options available with Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor.</li> <li>6) Provided instructions on how to get LockDown Browser to allow embedded links within an exam.</li> </ol>
How can we work interactively using equations or formulas with students online?	Graphics tablet, EasyCanvas tablet software, Zoom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Created a video tutorial to show faculty how to use the whiteboard tool within Zoom.</li> <li>2) Created a video tutorial to show faculty how to use graphics tablets to improve their writing with the Zoom whiteboard.</li> </ol>
How do we communicate effectively with our peers to minimize duplication of effort among faculty trying to address issues associated with online teaching?	Canvas community learning space	Many faculty were being referred to multiple people before landing on a faculty member with expertise in each area, so we consolidated information within Canvas.
What are the most effective ways of engaging our students?	Canvas discussion forums, Zoom whiteboards and video messaging, conferencing tools for virtual classrooms	Created a landing page and supporting linked pages to efficiently guide faculty through the transition online using best practices for student engagement within Canvas.
How do we create the optimal physical workspace for teaching from home?	Cameras, microphones, lighting, livestream switchers, and supporting software	Added pages for faculty who had expertise in recording, cameras, etc. who were sharing resources via email.

Our collaborative workspace continues to grow and evolve. What started out as a space to provide information to assist our most vulnerable faculty during this crisis morphed into a common place to collaborate, share, learn, and grow as we continue in our ETOL journey.

## Conclusion

This reflective essay introduced and described steps and strategies to help faculty prepare for an ETOL while also helping unburden overburdened CTLs. These steps included the creation of an open-access (public) online course shell to serve as a collaborative learning space. This space was created for and by faculty members so that business faculty could find and share helpful, discipline-focused information regarding the ETOL. The space provided step-by-step guides, technology hacks, and video tutorials covering various aspects of online teaching. These aspects included general tips and tricks, different approaches to recording video tutorials, and different methods for maintaining the integrity of online assessments. The creation of this collaborative space gave faculty new to online teaching, particularly adjuncts and junior faculty, a starting point to make the quick transition to online teaching. It also helped reduce the workload of CTLs as they assisted faculty across campus as they made the ETOL.

Best practices going forward include CTLs coordinating with power users within each discipline or school who can serve as additional “hands” during an ETOL or other crisis. Doing so serves two purposes. First, it helps lighten the workload of CTLs during sharp and sudden increases in demand. Second, power users can customize the strategies offered by CTLs to accommodate unique needs within their discipline. This type of learning space can be especially useful for junior faculty, who typically receive only basic training in teaching, and even less focus on online learning. This type of collaborative learning space can also provide annual training for adjunct and new faculty in the appropriate use of an institution’s LMS, which will facilitate new faculty’s transition to online learning in a new teaching position.

Faculty may never want to teach online. However, having a working knowledge of the tools available to supplement online learning is now one of the top best practices to follow. In this case, a pandemic was responsible for the ETOL, but the steps and actions outlined in this essay could apply to any instance where an ETOL is necessary, such as inclement weather or the sudden unavailability of critical teaching software.

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