ONLINE CIVIC ADVOCACY DEGREE  
Department of Communication

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OVERVIEW OF BENCHMARKS

1) Communication
Overview: It can be challenging to communicate in an online class. Two things must be clearly identified for when a student should:
1) expect a response via email/canvas
2) expect feedback on an assignment

2) Organization/Structured/Predictable
Overview: Design of the course needs to be clear so that the design/step up does not distract from the learning. It can be helpful to even have an explicit statement of the scheduling.

3) Social Presence/Immediacy
Overview: Social presence and immediacy can be harder to accomplish in an online setting. Some strategies include the use of audio and video with research also investigating the length and frequency of each technique.

4) Discussion
Overview: Transferring face-to-face discussions to online formats is challenging. Format/grading can vary. Clearly identify:
1) Parameters and guidelines for discussion
2) Variety of styles/formats

5) Accessibility
Overview: The following 4 benchmarks at minimum need to be achieved:
1) Use optical character recognition (OCR) and tag each PDF to ensure it could be used by text-to-voice software
2) Hyperlinks provided on course pages
3) All videos have captions
4) Pictures contain descriptions

6) Explore using Open Educational Resource (OER)
Overview: One study reports that on average, textbooks cost students over $90 per course and upwards of $900 per year (Hilton, Robinson, Wiley, & Ackerman, 2014). Another found that 66% of students did not purchase the course required textbook because of the cost (Martin, Wang, & Sadaf, 2017). Beyond just saving our students money, research shows that courses that adopt open educational resource (OER) texts improve student learning outcomes and performance to a statistically significant degree (Colvard, Watson, & Park, 2018).

A recent WSU survey showed that 35% of the students responding to the questionnaire felt that not purchasing a course textbook negatively influenced their grade and 58% indicated they did not purchase a course textbook because of the cost. Moreover, 30% failed to register for a course due to textbook costs and 30% registered for fewer courses for the same reason.

7) Consistent Resources/Layout
Requirement:
1) Department FAQ and Resource PPT
2) WSU Online “How to use canvas” link
3) Consistent landing homepage

*Bonus MPC Hybrid Courses
Overview: Our department also has a Master of Professional Communication program that follows a hybrid model. This project allowed faculty to discuss/reflect on hybrid best practices.

INTRODUCTION
WSU Online currently boasts over 25 degrees and programs that can be completed completely online. Not one of the degrees or programs is in the Lindquist College of Arts and Humanities. Our department proposes creating an all online pathway to completing a Bachelor’s of Science in Communication with a Civic Advocacy emphasis. The goal would be to create an exemplar online degree program for our department and college to follow by planning the entire curriculum using instructional design best practices as informed by the ADDIE model (Aldoobie, 2015).

GOAL & OUTCOMES
#1: Increase student enrollment and degree completion in the Civic Advocacy emphasis.

#2: Improve access to all Communication degrees by increasing core online class offerings.

#3: Enhance the instructional design and online pedagogical skills of Communication faculty.

#4: Disseminate project process and results at academic conferences.

PROCESS
1. Identify 19 courses (across 14 faculty) to create a master “sand box” to share as a best practice template.

2. Create 7 benchmarks the master course template must meet. These benchmarks and ideas are shared in a google doc to allow further brainstorm of best practices. Discuss at a faculty meeting.

3. Complete Best Practices Review for every course with WSU Online. Also complete student user experience with each master course template.

REFERENCE


Hilton III, J. L., Robinson, J., Wiley, D., & Ackerman, J. D. (2014). Cost savings achieved in two semesters through the adoption of open educational resources. The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 15(2), 1-11.


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