Hello all!

There is much afoot at UWG these days and optimism abounds. “Engage West,” the strategic plan update, other campus initiatives, and the hard work of dedicated faculty, staff, and students have UWG on its way to becoming the best comprehensive university in America to work, learn and succeed. The campus is embracing technology-enhanced learning at unprecedented levels, and there is a clear emphasis on problem-solving directed at making our educational offerings more accessible, flexible, and affordable for all. At the FDC and across campus, UWG is exploring new modes of instructional delivery and new potential student audiences with a renewed sense of resolve and hopefulness. I don’t mind saying that I am excited about the future. You will also notice that we are trying out a new format for the newsletter. I hope you enjoy it.
In this newsletter, Kim Huett is highlighted in our online faculty spotlight—you have no idea how many times after meeting Kim someone has turned to me and said some version of the phrase “Wow, you really married up didn’t you?” Kim was awarded one of the most prestigious teaching awards in Georgia: the 2014 Georgia Board of Regents’ Teaching Excellence Award. Kim is the first educator to ever receive the award in the “Online Teaching” category. In this newsletter, she shares some thoughts on her techniques, successes, and struggles when it comes to online teaching. In our “Online Student Spotlight” we meet Amber Austin—a graduate student in the Speech Language Pathology program who appreciates the flexibility and quality of UWG online courses. In the “Meet the Staff” section, we say goodbye to Ashley Eutsey, one of our outstanding graduate assistants and wish her luck after graduation.

As usual, the rest of the newsletter is filled with some great information and, if you have any feedback or ideas for inclusion, please send them our way.

Cheers,

Jason
My higher education journey began right here at The University of West Georgia. I received my Bachelors of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Sociology in summer 2011. Shortly thereafter I returned to UWG to start my Masters of Education program in Community Counseling. I have worked in several departments on campus and each position led me to this opportunity in the Distance Learning Department. My work history on campus includes positions in the Career Services, Graduate Studies, Financial Aid, and Counseling and Career Development Departments. I began working as a Graduate Assistant for the Distance Learning Department in May of 2012. Working for UWG Online I have been able to use my background in working on UWG’s campus, in addition to my customer service and counseling skills greatly in this position. The best part about this experience is the amount of knowledge I gained about online learning platforms as well as general information on troubleshooting technological issues. Developing and presenting workshops on various tools of Desire 2 Learn have also helped to hone my public speaking skills. We provide an array of services to faculty and staff that assist in the creation and running of online courses. We strive for valuable online learning experiences for both faculty and students. As a student who has taken several online courses I understand how important it is to have a professor who is able to interact with their students through the online course. The structure, design, and ease of use of the course are pivotal contributors to academic success within the course. At my position with UWG Online I have been able to play a part in the advancement of online learning for faculty, students, and UWG as a whole.

*UWGOnline would like to thank Ashley for her service and congratulate her on her graduation*
Desire2Learn Binder App
“Educators will be able to use this app to transition from print to digital. The Binder eText Platform includes engaging, intuitive cross-platform mobile and desktop applications to allow learners to read purchased eTextbooks, course content from the Desire2Learn Learning Environment, and personal learning materials. All this in a single location with tools a person needs to stay productive and organized. Binders apps are designed to help people with productivity as they learn from any place and any time.”
Binder Fetch “One can pull documents from Desire2Learn directly into the Binder app to work with on or offline.”
Send to Binder “Allows documents to be pushed from the Learning Environment directly.”

For more information: http://www.desire2learn.com/products/mobile/binder/

Beginner Tech
Evernote: A great tool for getting your point across is Skitch. Give feedback and share ideas on your desktop. Draw attention with annotation and markup, and make a point with shapes, arrows, and quick sketches.

Advanced Tech
SlideShark by Brainshark, Inc.: This is the number one app for showing a PowerPoint from an iPad, iPhone or iPod touch! This is for individuals and business owners who use animations, fonts, colors, graphics, and videos & hyperlinks intact.

Free Software Training
Try out Atomic Learning. It includes software training tutorials for hundreds of pieces of software, including Camtasia and Premiere. Give them a try at www.atomiclearning.com/highed/ The username is “UWG,” and the password is “college.”
Online News & Notes

Course Den Upgrade Spring 2014
CourseDen’s Desire2Learn (D2L) has now been upgraded to version 10.2.
Over the holiday break, CourseDen underwent an extensive upgrade. Our staff worked hard during the holiday break to ensure the upgrade went smoothly. This upgrade improves and fixes usability and added functionality that will enhance instructor and student experiences.

UWG ONLINE: Happenings, etc.

Join us on Google Hangouts on Air!
From your desk, log in to the iApollo Community on the first and third Thursdays of every month from 11:00 - 11:30 for Google Hangouts on Air.

Join the iApollo Community for the latest updates and event information. You must have a Google+ profile to join the iApollo Community Page.

http://tinyurl.com/kz5cbx2

02/21/14 11:00-11:30 USG Faculty Development Series: Accessibility

02/25/14 2:30-3:30 UWGLOnline Training: Gradebook

02/27/14 1:30-3:00 UWGLOnline Training: Discussions

03/04/14 12:00-1:30 Introduction to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Email Jessica Loiacono jloiacon@westga.edu to join our iApollo mailing list.

*** Streaming Live on Google Hangouts on Air***
Video will be available on YouTube.
Campus-wide training sessions are conducted by the Faculty Development Center.

For more Information, contact David Lloyd at dlloyd@westga.edu
Online Faculty Kudos

The FDC would like to recognize the following faculty for participating as members of our UWGIOnline QM Training Program. If you would like more information about this training as others, please contact our offices 678 839-5289.

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<tr>
<td>Gregory Dixon</td>
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<td>LaDonia Patterson</td>
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<td>Mary Bishop</td>
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<td>Charles Akin</td>
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<td>Rita Mahmoud</td>
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UWGIOonline 5-Star Courses

| Tiffany Parsons | Diana Mindrila | Frank Stonier |
Kim Huett

*Online Educational Technology Integration Instructor*

*Recipient of the 2014 Georgia Board of Regents’ Teaching Excellence Award*

I have been an instructor at UWG since 2007, when I was teaching Spanish part-time at Bowdon High School in the morning and racing down the road to UWG every day for a 12:30-3:00 maymester class. Things have not slowed down much since that first semester. Coming from K-12 to the higher education setting was eye-opening in terms of the opportunities and choices afforded educators at this level. In particular, working at UWG has allowed me to reflect on my teaching practice far more than I ever did in K-12. Although I was “web-certified” by a state virtual school prior to arriving at UWG, I really didn’t know that much about online course design, teaching, and learning at that point. Like everything else in life, it’s something you learn by doing. The DDEC (remember them?), UWG Online, ITS, and the faculty have together provided me with a stimulating professional learning environment. Here in Year 13 of teaching, I am beginning to feel somewhat competent.

You may be aware that I have won several teaching awards in recent years. A lot of folks ask me what’s so great about my online classes. For the long answer, you can read the [tome I wrote for the USG FY14 award](#). But I suspect you don’t want a long answer. You probably read newsletters for short, punchy answers. To be brief, then, the things that make me a competent online instructor are my organization, my clear communication, and my availability. Below, I’ll talk a little about each.

The centerpiece of my organization has got to be my [Course Plan](#). It is the brain of my courses. We all have some version of this document in our courses. This is the What Do I Do? And the When Do I Do It? document. There’s more of a burden on an online student to process their environment and understand what to do. From login to navigating a content module with its checklist, to the professor’s opening video, to the articles to read, to the discussion boards that are already bursting with way more commentary than is possible in a typical face-to-face course, to the unique scheduling demands of the course and the unique use of online tools—there is much to overwhelm the student. If we want our students to interact with our courses, we have to keep it simple for them.
Online Faculty Spotlight

They appreciate the time we take to be compulsive in our attention to detail and consistency.

That’s great, but.... The compulsivity often required to provide the internally-consistent, balanced, clearly labeled course can be very wearing. Over the MLK holiday, I spent three days in a row in my home office. On the third day (MLK day), I was so ground down by online toiling, I worked in my pajamas all day, taking occasional breaks only for brie and crackers (and for me, the online teacher in pajamas thing does not work; I like to get dressed for work).

Communications-wise, I open the semester with a welcome email and welcome video through which I tell students how and when to get started. I use the course News Feed for posting announcements in text, video, and audio formats. Every time I grade an assignment, I send an email to non-completers telling them a) what the assignment was, b) when it was due, c) where they can learn more about it, and d) how to contact me with questions. Students provide me with their contact info (including mobile phone #s), which I upload into my Google Contacts. This way, when they call or text me during the semester, I know who they are. I love it when I can answer the phone and say, “Hi, Melissa!” and she wonders for a moment how I knew it was her (a little technology being ‘indistinguishable from magic’). Of course, we also communicate through CourseDen email and the “Course Question and Answers Board,” where students can ask and answer one another’s questions. This semester, I have incorporated Google Community in each of my courses. In one course, students are posting current events related to a topic they choose. In the other course, students are promoting one another’s blog posts. We’ll see if it works out.

That’s great, but.... Managing all of these communications can be a bit much! I have three voicemail accounts, 2 bustling email accounts, text messaging, CourseDen email, multiple discussion boards, and now a Google Community. I should probably do some serious “channel consolidation” soon and get this down, because there are inevitable information fumbles each semester with so many channels open.

The above communications channels enhance my availability. Students can find me, and when they do, they won’t be rebuffed like I was when I visited one of my University of Texas English profs during his office hours: he literally blocked the entrance to his office, and his tight-lipped responses to my questions were like those of a taciturn teenager. His message was clear: “go away!” This experience
stuck with me, and I hope to not be that way with my students, even on the worst day. As many of you who teach face-to-face know and treasure, there are riches in the things our students say. In much the same way that medical doctors find the psychological context of a patient’s medical ailments to be revealing, the conversations we have with our students help us to understand their unique perspectives and how we might better build those bridges that connect them to the learnings we value for them. These conversations begin with availability, and in the online medium, we may have to bend over backwards to invite our students to dialogue (particularly if they have been rebuffed previously or if they are intimidated by the professorial mystique).

That’s great, but…. Most of my availability is asynchronous, although students can phone (all day) or visit my office. I really admire those professors on campus who go to extra lengths to engage their students synchronously through tools such as Google Hangout, GoTo Meeting, and Skype. As an online doctoral student, I can attest to the incredible value of these tools. For me, online meetings are great for social cohesion and high-end, collaborative work among groups of students.

I will end by saying that I took the easy route in writing contribution by talking about some of what I have done. I have listed behaviors and tools, and I have inserted a few jokes. What I have not really done is address the restless feeling I have about my teaching right now. I need to connect more with students and make sure that I am not only fulfilling the obligations of learning objectives and content, but that I am also igniting interest in the wider world. The risk of talking about connecting is that it sounds like a superficial social thing. But I am talking about the connection that happens when one human truly attends to another’s thoughts and responds, whether through dialogue, inquiry, or other means. In my current semester, I have 150 students across my 5 courses (3 courses have lots of projects, and 2 are an issues course: both with heavy grading loads because of my intentional decision to not automate with quizzes, etc.). Teaching is an ongoing series of reflections and revisions. As I move forward, I want to renew my focus on these questions: How do I know my classes are of educational value to my students? And how do I design online courses for large groups that foster the kind of engagement I want to see in my students?
Online Student Spotlight

Amber Austin

Masters of Education in Speech Language Pathology

I am a full time student at the University of West Georgia in the Speech Language Pathology graduate program in the College of Education. I am in my second year of graduate course work. I chose to attend UWG because I wanted attend a school with a small campus and tight knit community atmosphere. This was important to me since I attended undergrad at a large school in a big city and I felt like just another number.

Although this is not an online program, I have taken many online courses. We have several extra course requirements to take on top of our regular courses which would be difficult to fit in if online options were not available. Also, being able to take online courses really eases the stress of school because we have clinical practicums that require a great deal of work on and off campus. The graduate students in the program work in the Comprehensive Community Clinic on campus, The Oaks which is a skilled nursing facility in Carrollton and at the Pre-K on campus where we offer speech therapy services to the local community. I also work at UWG|Online as a full time graduate assistant. Having all of these responsibilities does not allow time for me to take extra courses.

I have previously taken online courses and I did not feel as though I learned as well as in a face-to-face class. I had a completely different experience here. Many of the online courses require discussions among the students and usually incorporate projects that really allow for a more hands on experience. Most of the online courses have been education classes and many of my cohort members would take the same course. I really enjoy having the online discussions with my cohort members who I do not get to talk to regularly face-to-face because of our differing clinic schedules. I also enjoy having online classes because it actually helps me to create a structured schedule for myself to complete my assignments.

I would recommend online courses to anyone whether taking all online classes or mixture of face-to-face and online. It allows for more flexibility in your schedule, which is beneficial for those who have jobs.
Quality Matters is a nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer review process created to promote the quality online/hybrid course design and online components.

QM has developed a prescribed sequence of workshops proposed to prepare instructors for becoming peer reviews of online/hybrid courses that have been submitted for review.

The following faculty have successfully completed the UWGIONline Training Program:

- George Bradford, Educational Technology & Foundations
- Patricia Riley, Criminology
- Timothy Ayers, Chemistry
- Gregory Dixon, Political Science
- Linda Haynes, Educational Technology & Foundations
- Lara Willox, School Improvement
- Brad Prince, Management
- Adriana D’Alba, Educational Technology & Foundations
- Cheryl Brown, Marketing and Real Estate
- Christopher Bounds, Criminology

If you have any questions for the UWGIONline department, you may email those to:

Dale Lyles, Ed.S.
Director Online Faculty Development

We're from the near future. We're here to help.
Questions & Submissions

For questions, suggestions, or items to include in the next newsletter such as:

*Upcoming Events, Workshops, & Training
*Publications & Other Achievements
*Online Teaching/Learning News & Insights

Please contact Toni Drake:
tdrake@westga.edu

We look forward to learning about and sharing your experiences and achievements.
Thank you for your contributions!

UWG Online CHALLENGE

The first three people to email the correct answers to the following questions will win something cool! **If you have won this year please allow someone else to respond.**

1. What helped Ashley to gain confidence in her public speaking ability?
2. What are the three things that make Kim Huett a competent, AWARD WINNING, instructor?
3. What is the number one app for showing a PowerPoint presentation from an apple device?
4. Why were Amber’s online courses at UWG so different from her past experiences?

Please email your responses to tdrake@westga.edu, List your full name, contact information and department. All questions must be answered correctly. Items awarded are for faculty use and will be transferred to department inventory. Thank you!