

Faculty First Grant Report - 2018

Project Title

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Project Overview and Course Overview

In 2017, I was asked to develop a graduate-level course on Data-driven Decision Making. This course focused on using basic statistical tools and research methods to enhance decision making in organizations. The end of the semester feedback indicated that some students indicated the course moved too quickly for those with limited statistics background while others found it moved too slowly. In essence, class time was not used as effectively as it could have been. After reflecting on this feedback, it was clear that providing additional material such as readings would not solve the problem since the problem was that students needed HELP with the material, not just the material itself. I thought about flipping part of the lecture so that students could work through some material at their own pace before class, allowing us to work on cases and problem-solving in the classroom. This would help less experienced students gain the background they need to be successful in the course and it would allow me to use class time to focus on the application of the course concepts to real-world examples and cases. But I was still challenged with finding a way to work with students who needed guided instruction on some of these fundamental concepts. While I ended up not teaching that course again due to scheduling constraints, my interest in learning about a method to provide additional resources to students outside of the normal class materials led me to a technique called screencasting.

Screencasting allows an instructor to capture the material written on a tablet or computer screen with narration. This method is used by Khan Academy and other high-quality online sites. It is more effective than narrating over a static power point presentation because it is much more engaging and allows you to create and capture content in real time. This methodology would also allow me to provide extra help when needed without requiring students to make an extra trip to campus or watch a generic youtube video not geared toward the specific needs of the student. If several students are struggling with a particular topic, this method makes it simple to address questions easily, provide an example of the concept and upload the video for students to view. The screencasting technique, once mastered, could also be used in other undergraduate and graduate courses to enhance student learning and flip the classroom.

My grant was used to support the purchase of an iPad Pro 10.5 and an Apple Pencil since my current laptop does not have a touch screen and cannot be used for screencasting. I believe the development of these types of skills and methods will make our courses more flexible and relevant for today's learners and can allow us to provide custom instructional materials for diverse learners with differing needs.

Semesters the course has been and/or will be taught

I began using the screencasting method to supplement the Project Management unit I added to the Management 202 course I taught in the Fall of 2018.

Number of students affected

I typically teach 3-4 sections of 80 students each for a total of 240-320 MGT 202 students per year. In the 2018-19 academic year I taught 5 sections.

Project outcomes and products

The iPad Pro and learning the screencasting method has been extremely helpful. I use this method to supplement teaching by (1) posting tutorials on topics that may not have been understood by students, (2) providing additional examples for students to help them grasp a complex topic and/or (3) providing individual students with extra help outside of the classroom.

(insert video sample here)

Student Evaluation

Student course evaluations for my sections of MGT 202 have been consistently in the 4.0-5.0 range across all questions but I am particularly proud that students responses to the comment “The instructor contributed to your understanding of course content” were extremely and consistently high across all 5 sections, indicating that this method, as well as other pedagogical methods, contribute to student learning and the perception that I help with their learning (Fall 2018 scores for all 5 sections were 4.79, 4.76, 4.31, 4.81 and 4.76).

Project benefits for the department and UT

I believe that embracing technology in all of its forms is beneficial to students. An awareness of student’s comfort with technology and improving our skills as instructors helps us “speak their language”. Also, the screen casting method is a very engaging and efficient way to address student questions, hone in on a tough concept and create an engaging learning environment. It has also helped me instruct other faculty in the project management techniques by simply sharing the videos I have created.

Conclusion

This project has helped me stretch and develop my technology skills and having an iPad is also helpful in the classroom for lectures. I travel quite a bit and appreciate the portability of an iPad and am able to catch up on work more easily when I am on the go. I was somewhat surprised by how many screencasting apps exist and it took me quite a bit of time to review them to find one that worked best for my needs. Each one seemed to have a different set of advantages and disadvantages. My initial recordings were done with ShowMe but I also experimented with Penultimate and iPevo Whiteboard. The OIT staff was great and partnered with me to support my progress but given that this is a relatively new technique, we were sort of learning it together. The project has sparked my interest in experimenting with more apps and identifying other uses for this technology.