Tool-Kit and Associated Communication Plan for Support of Online Course Development
Provost's Leadership Academy 2023-24
Group Members: Mohammad Al Faruque, Laura Ewell, Thomas Martinez, Kylie Peppler, Danielle Thomsen, and Charlie Zender.

Our group was tasked with creating a toolkit and associated communication plan for online course development. In this report, we first review the DTEI resources that are currently available to UCI faculty. We then describe how, through interviews with faculty, we created various personas that capture important differences across faculty in their needs, backgrounds, and familiarity with online teaching. We conclude by providing recommendations to DTEI going forward.

I. DTEI Resources Currently Available

We began by exploring the DTEI website and learning about the resources that are currently available to faculty. Each of us spent a couple of hours browsing the site, clicking through the drop-down menus, and scanning the links and references. We found the Digital Active Learning techniques to be clear and useful (under Resources—Pedagogy). Similarly, the Exam Digitization & Grading Techniques and Learning Technologies provide valuable tools and enhance students' learning experience (both are under Resources—Digital Learning). At the same time, we thought it was hard to learn how to use them in Canvas; for example, how to link Poll Everywhere directly to grades and attendance.

The DTEI sample Canvas course was both helpful and professional. Our suggestions to improve the sample Canvas course are: 1) add more content from the best-practices syllabus provided elsewhere on the DTEI website, 2) place examples of complementary tools like PollEverywhere, Gradescope, and Turnitin, and Yuja directly in the Canvas template. The overall goal is to provide one or more sample Canvas courses aligned with the various teaching goals and technology infusion levels desired by the Faculty personas described below. Template elements that are easy to adopt or excise are most useful. We also suggest that the sample course include information on screen fatigue, demonstrate inclusion of podcasts as source materials (videos are already demonstrated), provide examples that engage students to create and turn-in their own digital content, and link to AI-based assessment and application tools.

The website language could be clearer and more concise. For example, instead of generic terms like "faculty development", the site might instead use terms like "online teaching workshops" or "online teaching consultants." There is also repetition across drop-down menus, and DTEI could streamline the site and collapse categories that overlap or cover very similar topics. Similarly, we believe it would be easier for users to navigate to all online course related material under a single drop down menu. For example, consider moving the Online Student Engagement currently under Pedagogy to the Digital Learning section.

II. Faculty User Personas

Our main contribution is to introduce user personas to support and enhance online course development. Each persona represents a larger group of faculty whose specific needs can be usefully distinguished from the other personas. This allows the designers to create more empathetic, intuitive, and satisfying services, content, and functionality. The suggested faculty personas are based on four specific attributes:

1) Backgrounds: Prior teaching experience, the online modalities in their teaching, the subject area and content of the course, and their proficiency with technology
2) Preferences and Behaviors: How they design courses and which channels they use to develop new courses
3) Goals and Objectives: What are they trying to achieve and what problems are they aiming to solve
4) Pain points and Challenges: What are the challenges they face with online teaching and what are their motivations to use DTEI to improve their online teaching

The four personas depicted in the presentation each represent a distinct blend of these attributes: 1. An experienced Professor, new to UCI, with decades of in-person instruction experience yet no knowledge of online course design or DTEI; 2. A beginning Assistant Professor, relatively new to teaching, who is pressed to develop an online course; 3. An Associate Professor, well versed in online teaching modalities and theory, who wishes to infuse advanced functions into his large online courses; 4. An Assistant Professor, already savvy with online course design, looking for technology assistance to further equity in his teaching. These personas comprise a realistic range in teaching experience, tech-savviness, course design goals, and familiarity with DTEI. We provide targeted recommendations based on the user's persona.

III. Toolkit and Communications Design Recommendations

We suggest that DTEI use SalesForce-Powered Communications Solutions to tailor online instructional resources to particular faculty. DTEI could foster personalized professional development by asking faculty questions about the attributes noted above and matching the expertise of staff, services, tools, and communication materials with faculty needs and desires. The evaluation would provide data-driven insights that are targeted to faculty with those specific needs and preferences.

Online learning is an increasingly common modality in university environments. In working on this project, each of us learned a great deal about the impressive resources that are already available on the DTEI website. Our ideas on how to further enhance online course development stem from the large variation across those who use and rely on these tools. Tailoring online materials to the diverse needs of users may increase uptake and broaden their impact among a wider range of faculty.