California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Innovative Course Redesign Grant Reports

Teaching Resource Center

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Title of Grant Award: Course Development Grant (Summer, 2010)

Project Goal: To convert the classroom version of HD540/Psyc540 to an all on-line class.

When Implemented (Quarter the course was taught): This class was first taught in Spring 2011 as a completely on-line class.

Brief Description of the Project (as described in the proposal): Students at CSUSB who are interested in working with older adults can apply for the Gerontology Certificate program housed in the Sociology Department. The Gerontology Certificate is a multidisciplinary (university-wide) program intended for students seeking professional development in working with older adults in the health and human service sectors. The training for students requires a set of three core courses providing instruction in the multiple processes of aging and a minimum of sixteen units of upper division elective courses, chosen with the approval of the academic advisor. One of the core (required) courses (SOC330 – Social Gerontology) was recently awarded an Innovative Course Development Grant to allow that to be offered on-line. The HD540/PSYC540 course would be one of the only electives for the Gerontology Certificate to be offered on-line as well. After consulting with the Gerontology Certificate Advisory Board it became clear that students attending other programs (e.g., RN to BSN Nursing program) on campus and/or at the Palm Desert campus could not complete the requirements for the Gerontology Certificate unless some of the core and elective courses are offered in the evening schedule and/or as a hybrid or completely on-line course.

HD540/PSYC540 is also an elective class for undergraduate Psychology and Human Development majors and for the MS in I/O Psychology graduate students. The class has been offered only as a traditional seminar class to date, with lecture presentations, student activities, and projects. It has been offered to students on the main campus, only during the day, and somewhat infrequently. Offering it on-line would thus allow more students to take the class and also allow the course to be offered on a more frequent basis.

How the Project was Implemented (including how it differed from original plan): During the summer of 2010, source materials were identified and gathered for the proposed on-line class. This included finding and evaluating additional web based materials in order to be accessible and amenable to the new on-line only format. Student SOTEs from spring 2010 were also reviewed in order to identify adjustments to the class that would be appropriate for the new on-line format. Additional, updated readings and materials were identified, as were web based resources such as on-line videos. The class was then offered in spring 2011 for the first time in the on-line only format.

Results of the Project: The new on-line version of HD540/Psyc540 was offered for the first time in spring 2011. As can be seen in the table below, class size nearly doubled from spring 2010. A major issue in offering this class on a regular basis was the inability to get at least 10-15 students to enroll in the class. In fact, the class had been scheduled several times in the last few years but had to be cancelled due to low enrollments. Thus, one of the goals of offering the class in an on-line format was to increase the enrollment. Moving to an on-line format did allow us to meet this critical goal.

In addition, the balance of HD and Psyc students was much higher in the new on-line format. Also, the class is a 500 level class, so it is appropriate for both upper division undergraduate students and graduate students. However, last time it was offered in spring 2010 there were almost an equal number of undergraduate and graduate students. In the on-line version of the course, the number of undergraduate students was much higher.

Finally, I had anticipated that there may be a higher percentage of withdrawals in the on-line version of the class, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that it was actually lower than the regular classroom version.

	Spring 2010 _Regular Classroom_	Spring 2011 _First time On-line_
Class Size	12	20
HD to Psyc Ratio	2 (17%) to 10 (83%)	8 (40%) to 12 (60%)
Undergraduate to Graduate Ratio	7 (58%) to 5 (42%)	17 (85%) to 3 (15%)
Number of Withdrawals	1 (8.3%)	1 (5%)

Additional Comments (Lessons Learned, Insights, Future Plans, etc.): A major stumbling block to obtaining a more thorough assessment of this new on-line class was the fact that instructional technology administrators decided to implement a new version Blackboard over the spring break between winter and spring quarters. As a result, much of the first week or two of classes was spent trying to figure out why students were unable to sign on to the class and complete class assignments. As a result, I was unable to implement the pre-test measure of student knowledge. So, I was not able to implement this portion of my original assessment goals. A major lesson learned was to be prepared to deal with significant technology issues, particularly at the beginning of the quarter when new versions of the course software were being implemented!

In addition, another major learning point was the need to be extremely explicit in all assignments with students. Because you are not in the classroom with student in an on-line class, students appeared to be more reluctant to send follow up e-mail questions right away to clarify specifics of a given assignment. As a result, it was clear that in several instances students did not fully understand the requirements for a given assignment and thus were not able to show there full knowledge and understanding of the material.

Finally, while there were some significant practical and technical issues with the implementation of the new version of Blackboard in spring 2011, it is clear that the new version of Blackboard does have some new functions and capabilities (e.g., on-line grading with detailed feedback and links to Turnitin and the on-line grade book in Blackboard) that make it eminently more amenable to teaching a class in an on-line only format. These benefits appear to extend to both faculty and students.