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## Online Teaching Conference - A Blog Post

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## Blog Post for Title III Professional Development

### Online Teaching Conference, Long Beach, CA, June 29 – July 1

This summer I attended the Online Teaching Conference in Long Beach, California, from June 29 to July 1. The conference was in Long Beach Convention Center, which was an impressive venue and was perfect for hosting such a conference. This was the first time the conference was back in a face-to-face format after the COVID interruption a couple of years ago when it went virtual. Because of the high airfare cost, most conference attendees were from the surrounding cities and mainly from California. I was probably one of the very few attendees from out of state.

The weather was mild and the conference venue was a 10-minute walk from my hotel. I took advantage of the networking opportunities during breaks, and it was so good to meet faculty members from California colleges who were interested in online teaching. I've been to many conferences in my lifetime, so one thing that was very noticeable at this conference was the absence of meals and snacks! Maybe it was inflation, or maybe this is probably the only way they could keep the registration cost down. Whatever the reason might be, it was fine with me and gave me a chance to explore many dining choices nearby.

The conference started on Wednesday (6/29) and ended at 12:00 pm on Friday (7/1). Because there were multiple sessions happening at the same time, I had to choose the sessions I was most interested in attending. There were three presentations on Wednesday that deserve mention. These were the following:

- **The Challenge of Audio: Creating Great Audio for Video Productions and Online Classes.**
- **Online Live, Synchronous Instruction: Highlights from a Review of Literature, Effective Practices, and Recommendations.**
- **Online Course Design Matters! Let's Focus on Structure, Alignment, Accessibility, and Support.**

The first one was quite interesting, and the speaker offered some interesting tips on how to create good video clips. I also got some recommendations on which earphones to buy when teaching a class on Zoom. The second one was mainly academic and the presenter went over some effective practices based on and supported by the literature. The third one was very useful, and the presentation covered a lot of details on how to design a course online. Here is a one-page handout that I'd like to share with others who might find it useful. This talks about course design, accessibility, facilitation, and the use of external tools.

## Strategies for Improving Course Design, Engagement, & Accessibility

### Course Design - Tips for Improving Course Structure

- Welcoming home page with course links and instructor video
- Consistent navigation across all modules with clearly labeled buttons
- Chunk materials to reduce scrolling
- Module - "Bookending" (Beginning & Wrap-up) & module overview with to-do-list
- Transparent assignment template
- Alignment between CLOs, MLOs, activities, assignments, and assessment

### Accessibility Tips

- Tabbed navigation
- Remove decorative images/tag as decorative and always include alt text (intentional)
- All files, videos, and external sites are "accessible" or remediate/remove them
- Use descriptive labeling
- Include prompt to address accessibility on registration form and learner profile survey
- Include accessibility statements for external tools used (e.g, start here module & syllabus)

### Facilitation/Instructors "Humanize & Intrusive High Touch Model"

- Develop "Welcome Video"
- Provide weekly "optional" zoom office hours for participants and announce them
- Grade within 24-48 hr. following scheduled due dates for an assignment
- Use video and/or audio in discussions and grading as appropriate to humanize yourself
- Remind" participants to catch up- send email to non-completers every day an activity is due
- Respond to 1/3 of all discussion posts (be active in discussions)

### Managing PD "Humanize & Intrusive High Touch Model"

- Recruit "faculty leaders" to serve as facilitators
- Schedule facilitator launch meeting & mentor NEW facilitators
- Provide "instructor guide" - tips, sample announcements & feedback bank
- Check participant access to the course (before & during) & communicate with Dept. Chair
- Check consistently to ensure facilitators grade timely & assist with grading if needed
- Check to ensure facilitators are active in at least 1/3 of all discussions

### External Tools to Increase Engagement

- Ensure accessibility of tools - provide VPAT in syllabus
- Check what external tools are available and supported at your campus
- Limit the number of external tools used
- Provide/develop support resources and tutorials
- Facilitators "model" use of the tool

Day two of the conference had two parts – morning sessions with presenters followed by two afternoon sessions of open discussion. These open discussions were called “unconference Networking Sessions.”

I attended the following two morning sessions:

- **A Template for Creating Course Alignment and Course Compression**
- **Prevent Disruptive Behavior in TechConnect Zoom Meetings**

The first one went over some steps or strategies for compressing a course from a 16-week to an 8-Week format, making sure the compression did not lose any important course content. The other presentation covered some tips on how to minimize the disruptive behavior of students during a Zoom lecture.

The afternoon sessions or Unconference Networking Sessions were open discussions for Canvas users and there were many questions and answers which I really enjoyed as a Canvas user.

The last day only had morning sessions as the conference wrapped up before noon. Two presentations are worth mentioning as they talked about some interesting issues related to online teaching. These two presentations were:

- **Equitable Grading Strategies for Online Teaching**
- **Discussion Boards: How to Make them more Engaging**

I look forward to attending this conference again in Long Beach, California, as they already announced that they’ll be hosting this in the same place next year. Online teaching, especially the technology/tools surrounding online teaching is constantly changing. Attending a conference such as this one is probably one of the ways to stay in touch with changing trends and changing technologies in online teaching.