

Making the Most of Blended (Hybrid) Courses

Roseanna J. Wright, Ph.D.

Maria Agnew, Ph.D.

Brian Berry, Ph.D.



Holy Family

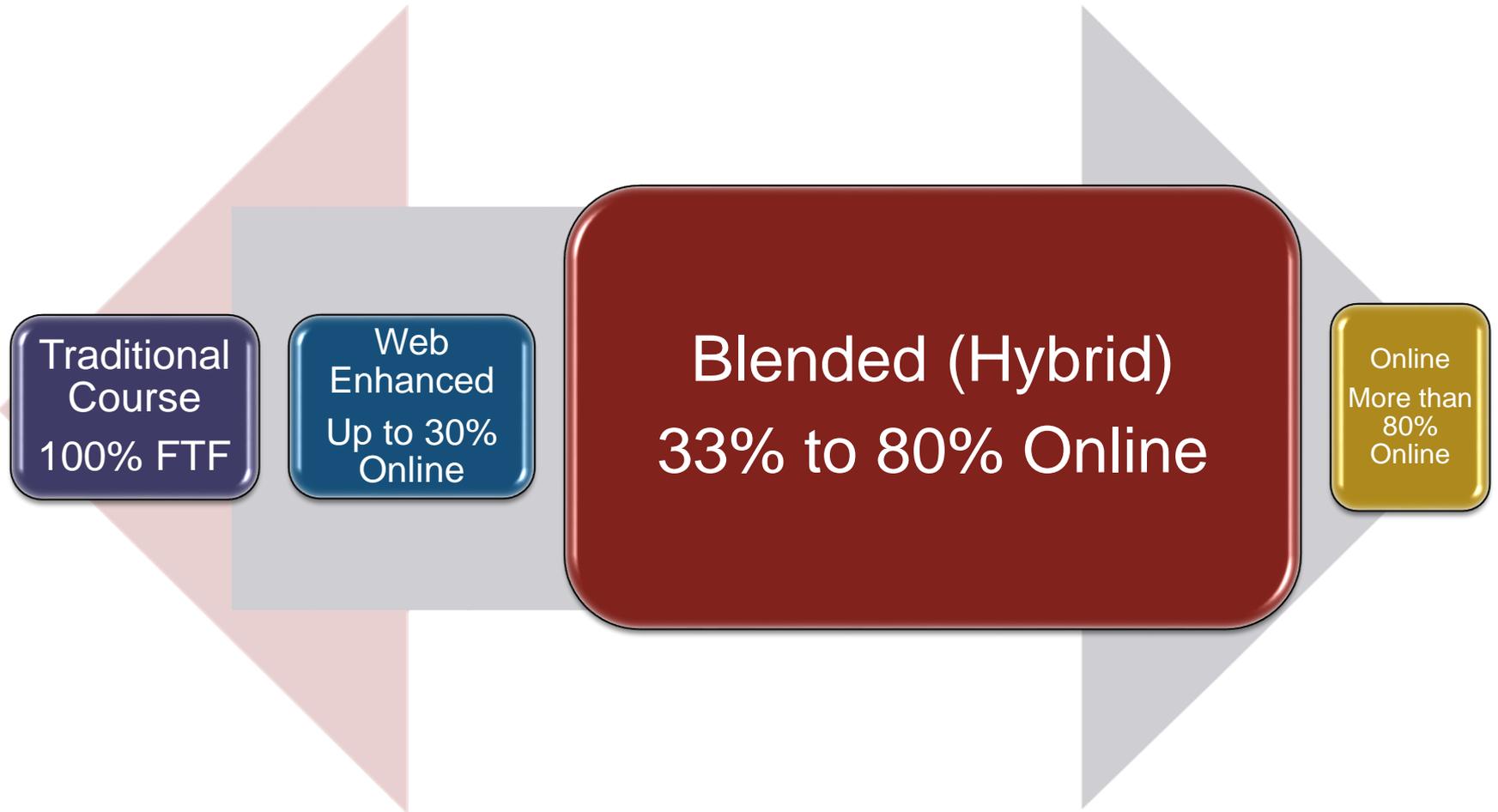
UNIVERSITY

- A four-year university based in Philadelphia.
- Undergraduate and graduate programs
- Four schools
 - Education
 - Business
 - Nursing and Allied Health Professionals
 - Arts and Sciences

Definitions



Blended



In our experience...

Some students (both with and without disabilities) struggle with:

- ✓ Locating information on BlackBoard (BB)
- ✓ Posting assignments on BB
- ✓ Understanding the expectations
- ✓ Following the schedule
- ✓ Participating in online tasks

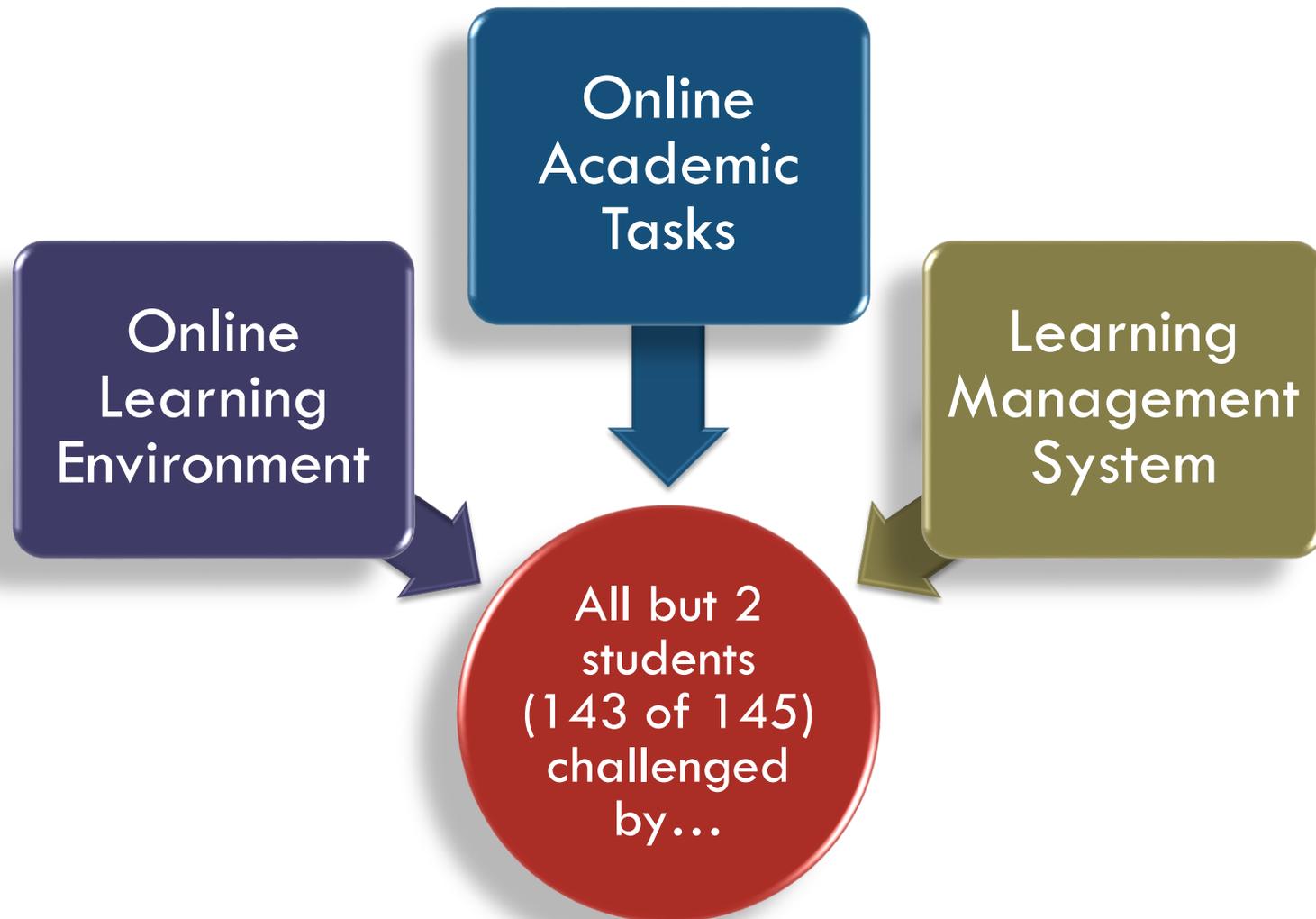
Pilot Study

- Explored challenges to participation in blended courses in terms of:
 - ▣ access to the online environment
 - ▣ completion of online academic tasks
 - ▣ using the Learning Management System - BlackBoard

Pilot Study Focus

- ❑ How can we enhance built in benefits?
- ❑ How can we minimize or eliminate challenges?
- ❑ To maximize learning for **ALL** students in blended courses

Results....



Top Challenges Online Learning Environment

- BB organization
 - Cluttered
 - Navigation
- Font size/style
 - Impacts readability
 - Spacing
- Hyperlinks
 - Too many confusing
 - Lose place
- Scrolling
 - Impacts tracking



Top Challenges Online Academic Tasks

- ❑ Lack of availability/slow response time of instructor
- ❑ Unclear instructions/criteria
- ❑ Online collaboration
- ❑ Overwhelming Discussion Boards
- ❑ Wikis, Blogs



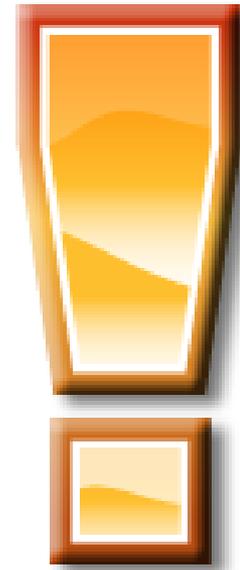
Top Challenges Learning Management System

Learning
Management
System

- How to navigate
- How to use tools

Students With Disabilities:

*Similar
challenges,
just more
challenging!*



Student comments....

Students value the convenience of the online module in terms of time and travel

Students appreciate increased availability of the instructor via the face to face classes and through email

Students report that the face to face classes are crucial in mastering the material introduced in the online modules and allow them to clarify future module instructions

Students identified the increased variety of learning materials as an important factor in their success in the course.

Students appreciate the organization of a consistent course template

What we did....

- 12 blended courses during Spring 2014 semester
- Professional Development
 - ▣ One hour faculty workshops
 - ▣ Follow up monthly emails
 - ▣ Follow up individual assistance as requested
- Student Survey
- Faculty Feedback

Research Questions

- *Does the inclusion of student identified instructional, course management and course design strategies improve the experience of students participating in blended courses in terms of:*
 - ▣ *access to the online environment*
 - ▣ *completion of online academic tasks, and*
 - ▣ *using BlackBoard?*

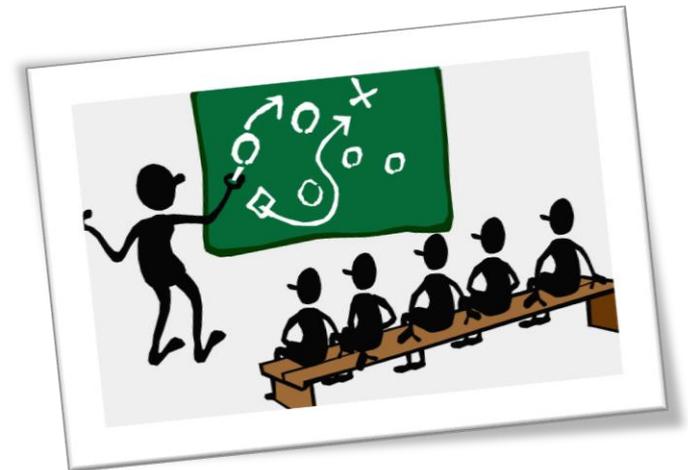
Professional Development

- *Is providing faculty new to designing and teaching blended courses with instruction and ongoing support in implementing identified:*
 - *Instructional*
 - *course management , and*
 - *course design strategies*
- an effective method of professional development?*

Course Management Considerations

Communication and Instruction

- First two weeks FTF
 - Allows time for:
 - Demonstration
 - Practice
 - Questions
- Individual instruction when needed
- Relationship building



Course Design Considerations - Accessibility

- *Universal Design for Learning
(Accessible Design for all
Students)*
 - Blended Course Template
 - Consistency
 - Incorporates accessible features
 - Provides easy access to help
 - Font – 14 and sans serif
 - Spacing
 - Color/contrast – white on dark or
black on white

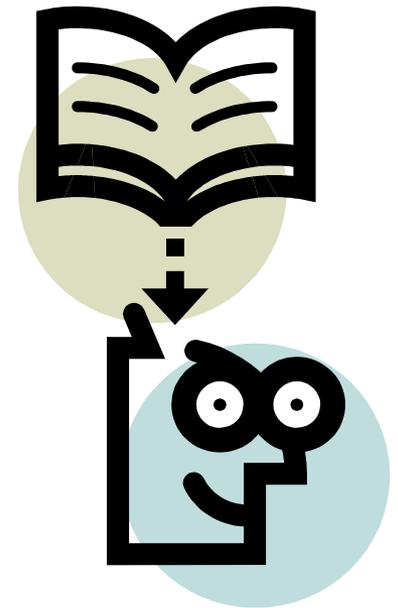


Course Design Considerations – Online Environment

- Bundle online class materials
- Minimize online collaboration requirements
- Reduce Discussion Board confusion
- Minimize hyperlinks and provide description of hyperlink destination
- Minimize need to scroll

Course Design Considerations – Online Academic Tasks

- Provide more instruction in “*what*” and “*how to*”
- Provide clear rubrics and provide sample posts
 - ▣ Discussion Boards
 - ▣ Blogs
 - ▣ Journals
 - ▣ Wikis



Results – Online Learning Environment

Less Challenging

- Hyperlinks
- Scrolling
- Spacing
- Font size
- Field/Ground
- LMS Organization

Results – Online Academic Tasks

Less Challenging

- Wikis, Blogs
- Reading content
- Taking tests/quizzes
- Completing WebQuests

Same/More Challenging

- Discussion Boards
- Timely response from instructor
- Online collaboration
- Unclear instructions/rubrics

Results – LMS Tasks

Less Challenging

- Downloading documents
- Uploading documents
- Navigating in general

Same/More Challenging

- Submitting assignments
- Locating documents
- Accessing grades

Faculty Experience

- Fewer student questions on “how to” and “where is”
- The ability to use a consistent template helps in development of other blended courses and provides consistency for students across courses
- Bundling the online as well as face to face classes has helped organize the course not only for the student but for the instructor as well
- Helped to highlight needed course improvements
 - ▣ Info in multiple locations
 - ▣ Clarity of assignments/rubrics
 - ▣ Online workload issues

As Professional Development..

- Good way to introduce blended course instruction – eased anxiety
- Helped to understand the strength of the blended course – interplay between F2F and online sessions
- Highlighted the need for:
 - ▣ Clarity
 - ▣ Communication
 - ▣ Direct instruction LMS navigation and tasks
- Would have liked more meetings/training

Next Steps....

- University has adopted template for all courses
- Focused Professional Development
- Blended/Online Course Mentors

Questions?

- Dr. Roseanna J. Wright
 - rwright@holyfamily.edu