

Making Hybrids Work

An Institutional Framework
for Blending Online and
Face-to-Face Instruction
in Higher Education

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vii
Matthew Russell	
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
Big Picture—Narrow Focus	1
Hybrid Learning—Its Lifecycle at Your Institution as Challenge and Opportunity	9
Making Hybrids Work: An Institutional Framework	16
1 <i>Defining and Advertising Hybrids at Your Institution</i>	25
The Hybrid Moment	26
Defining Hybrids: The Why and When	27
Do Hybrids Already Have an Institutional History?	39
How Hybrids Are Advertised: General Marketing	40
How Hybrids Are Advertised: The Registration System	46
How Hybrids Are Advertised: Course-Level Explanations	54
2 <i>Developing, Supporting, and Assessing Hybrids at Your Institution</i>	58
Field and Experiential Learning: The Original Hybrid?	59
Developing Hybrid Curricula	63
Supporting Hybrid Curricula	69
Assessing Hybrid Curricula	85
3 <i>Training Instructors for Hybrid Courses</i>	101
Finding Leaders for Professional Development	103
Ongoing Training: The Inhouse Workshop	108
Identifying Key Areas to Cover	110
The Faculty Training Workshop Series	112
Continuing Support/Education/Development beyond the Workshop	139
Fit Though Few? Acknowledging Workshop Participation	142



INTRODUCTION

Big Picture—Narrow Focus

Increasingly we see new, diverse delivery modes available to today's higher education student and teacher. The traditional face-to-face (f2f) model of classroom lecture persists, of course, though it may in fact be under fire now more than ever as new pedagogical approaches and new technologies make the traditional classroom-based lecture format seem staid and unexciting, a holdover from past educational eras whose realities just do not always hold true for us now as they might have before. At present, in addition to that traditional lecture format, there are many instructional settings that students might encounter as they pursue a certificate, program, or degree. Fully distance-based, online learning is a viable option at many schools, for example. Massive online courses are making headlines, though few yet award transferable academic credit and their potential long-term impact on learning has yet to be fully understood. Some institutions offer independent study courses, which might involve both face-to-face and online components. And with the increasing accessibility and usability of mobile technologies we see new learning modes emerge that seek to take advantage of handheld devices like smartphones and tablets. In short, higher education now finds itself trying to manage many different delivery modes and instructional alternatives, weighing their pros and cons, and often trying to separate opportunities for true innovation from the noise of media hype.

A concurrent and no doubt related reality across higher education is that many institutions are beginning to rethink how they award credit across what could be a wide variety of different instructional delivery settings. Today's student can, in some

cases, earn a degree having participated in many different kinds of classes: some face-to-face, some online, some independent study, and some not a traditional “class” in any sense at all. The University of Wisconsin (UW) system, for example, started offering, as of Fall 2013, what they have called the “Flexible Option,” whereby students earn credit by working in a combination of learning modes, tailored to the student’s background and current life situation. Dubbed a “new, innovative way to make UW degree and certificate programs more accessible, convenient, and affordable,” the UW Flex Option stresses adaptability and personalization to student needs (“University of Wisconsin Flex Option FAQs”). A variant of this approach, though one mandated by the school rather than chosen by the student, is the program offered by schools like the University of Florida whereby a student who might not otherwise gain full admission as an incoming first-year student is granted a sort of conditional acceptance with the offer to take classes for their first two years fully online before being admitted as a junior and then able to take classes on campus (see Chafin).

Further, author Seb Murray, in an article entitled “Growth of Blended Online and Campus MBA Learning Gathers Pace,” has noted that “the blended learning revolution at business schools is gathering pace.” Citing increasing competition among big-name business programs, like those at Harvard and Stanford, and schools with less immediate name recognition, Murray describes newly emerging degree models that include a blend of both online and face-to-face coursework. As of September 2015, for example, the Miami School of Business will launch a new degree option that includes primarily online coursework leading to a master’s in business administration. But this online work will be bolstered by a week-long residency at the school’s Miami, Florida, campus. Murray also cites Susan Cates, executive director of the online MBA offered by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Kenan-Flagler Business School, who asserts that “without question, blended learning is an essential adaptation for business schools” (qtd. in Murray). Anthony Macardi, a professor of finance and the executive director of graduate programs at the John F. Welch College of Business at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut, argues that the blended model, especially one

that combines primarily online work with intense, though short, periods of face-to-face interaction “provides flexibility for professionals who want to experience our masters, but can’t commit to onsite classes on a weekly basis” (qtd. in Murray).

We find this trend toward flexibility at the course level as well. What are sometimes called HyFlex hybrid courses, for example, are an increasingly popular instructional model that allows instructors to more closely tailor their courses to reflect individual student needs and abilities. Specifically, HyFlex is “a course design model that presents the components of hybrid learning (which combines face-to-face with online learning) in a flexible course structure that gives students the option of attending sessions in the classroom, participating online, or doing both.” As such, “Students can change their mode of attendance weekly or by topic, according to need or preference. In this ‘flexible hybrid’ design, instructors provide course content for both participation modes and can tailor activities for each format” (“7 Things You Should Know about . . . the HyFlex Course Model”). A student who finds particular aspects of a course more challenging might opt to attend classroom meetings that week rather than working through the material online, particularly if that student feels that the opportunity for immediate, real-time interaction with an instructor will enhance her learning. In other variants of the HyFlex model, teachers may require classroom attendance for students who are struggling in the online environment; alternately, students may be specifically directed to online resources to support weaknesses that emerge from classroom work. Each student’s experience with a HyFlex course, then, could be quite different from any other student’s experience, though each is enrolled, at least nominally, in the same course and section. Such flexibility introduces significant instructional design challenges, not to mention the potential day-to-day demands it puts on teachers to tailor dynamic learning experiences for each individual student. But the idea of the HyFlex reinforces the degree to which instructional flexibility is becoming more and more a valued part of the educational experience.

In any case, both the HyFlex course design option and programmatic blended modes, like that offered as part of the UW Flex Option, provide good examples of what we see as an

especially promising direction for higher education in the future, particularly as it tries to sort out various learning modes, their relation to one another, their pace of change, and their ultimate pedagogical efficacy: the hybrid. We see the hybrid as an instructional model that can preserve what educators already do well and what many students still claim to want as part of their education experience: real-time, face-to-face interaction with peers and professors. Yet hybrids also offer opportunities for real, sustainable curricular innovation in the form of online learning: this too is often expected by students, sometimes the very same students who also want to preserve at least some classroom face-time. As we will look to show in this book, hybrids are neither brand new to higher education, nor are they a reinvention of the wheel. They have the capacity to represent real curricular innovation, but they do require focused institutional attention and support if they are to flourish.

The hybrid model generally continues to gain greater public visibility. The 2013 New Media Consortium's *Horizon Report* has stated that "institutions that embrace face-to-face/online hybrid learning models have the potential to leverage the online skills learners have already developed" and that "hybrid models, when designed and implemented successfully, enable students to travel to campus for some activities, while using the network for others, taking advantage of the best of both environments" (NMC *Horizon Report* 2013 8).

The National Education Association's 2013 policy statement on digital learning for the twenty-first century asserts that "an environment that maximizes student learning will use a 'blended' and/or 'hybrid' model situated somewhere along a continuum" between what they dub the "extremes" of fully face-to-face and fully online instruction (National Education Association). In short, interest in hybrids is growing. And hybrids are now clearly attracting the attention of highly visible, and highly influential, organizations.

To be sure, though, in the present work we'll look to complicate the overly simplistic "best of both worlds" jingoism that sometimes surrounds hybrids. We will discuss, for example, how important it is for institutions to provide clear and transparent advertising about this learning mode to current and prospective

students, since hybrids can all too easily become part of an institutional marketing campaign to attract students with promises of “flexibility” (and, perhaps implicitly, “ease”) even when such advertising does a disservice to the hybrid instructional setting, to faculty teaching in it, and, most importantly, to students trying to learn in it. But certainly we do believe that hybrid learning stands to make a considerable impact in the world of higher education sooner rather than later. The depth of that impact will depend crucially on effective institutional planning and a sustained investment in ongoing professional development.

Additionally, though the literature on hybrid course design remains scant, relative to the coverage that curricular design and teaching in other instructional settings has received, it continues to grow, as evidenced by works like Jay Caulfield’s excellent book, *How to Design and Teach a Hybrid Course*, Jason Snart’s *Hybrid Learning: The Perils and Promise of Blending Online and Face-to-Face Instruction in Higher Education*, and Garrison and Vaughan’s *Blended Learning in Higher Education*. Hybrid learning also receives attention in high-profile academic journals like *Teaching with Technology, Computers and Composition*, and the *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*.

What we feel is needed, and what this book looks to provide, however, is a comprehensive look at how hybrid curriculum development—including course design, teaching, and support—can ideally exist, *and become sustainable*, on the institutional level. We are less concerned with how to design one specific hybrid course than we are with taking the broad, campus-level view. In addition, we look to provide insight on how institutions might develop effective faculty training and professional development opportunities, again thinking beyond the design and delivery of a single course, and more toward how an entire department, division or, better yet, institution can position itself for success in the hybrid learning field.

This isn’t to say, of course, that attention to detail at the course level is somehow secondary for educators—it isn’t. The individual class is where the learning mode brings together students and teachers, so effective course design is crucial for student success. In fact, there are already relatively robust course-design resources for those interested in seeking them out. We feel that

the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee hybrid learning website provides useful guidance for those looking to design a hybrid class (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, “Hybrid Courses”). Worth noting is that UW-Milwaukee has developed a dedicated website focused just on hybrid learning. It is not rolled into some other site, as often happens. Simply put, there is a recognizable “home” for hybrid learning within the institutional website. One often finds hybrid learning resources buried within an online learning website or within some version of an “innovative teaching” site.

The UW-Milwaukee dedicated site is nicely designed, by which we mean primarily that it is not overwhelming. One problem of having an institutional hybrid learning page folded into some larger website, be it an online learning site or teaching with technology or just an umbrella “teaching and learning” or “professional development” site, is the sheer intimidation factor. We look for resources on hybrid course design, but what we find is everything from how to use clickers in the classroom, to when the next “how to master the gradebook” training is, to tips on effective group work in class: in other words, a hodgepodge of technology-related material, professional development material, and instructional support material.

If we are trying to encourage faculty to think about hybrid teaching as a significant project in curricular design, one potentially involving a good deal of self-reeducation, the last thing we need them to be doing is wading through tangentially related material on “innovative teaching” or the like. It may sound overly simplistic, but the prospect of developing and then teaching hybrid courses needs to be inviting, on all levels, including how support resources are presented on the Web.

The UW-Milwaukee site provides information for faculty and for students. Their course design material includes a section titled “Ten Questions to consider when redesigning a course for hybrid teaching and learning” (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, “Hybrid Courses”). We like that these have, at least on the surface, little to do with technology. In other words, question one is not “are you an expert at using the LMS,” as though that were some necessary prerequisite for teaching a hybrid course. Instead, the questions are about teaching: student success, learn-

ing objectives, and general pedagogy. Question one asks, for example, “What do you want students to know when they have finished taking your hybrid course?” That is a great place to start. Truthfully—and this is why we think the question works well as an unthreatening invitation to think about the hybrid model—the answer should not vary much, if at all, regardless of delivery mode. So the student who takes Math 101 online, face-to-face, or in the hybrid format should, ideally, leave the class having learned the same basic skills and having met (ideally) the same course objectives . . . objectives, we should point out, having to do with math, not technology use.

The UW-Milwaukee Hybrid Learning site also advertises its inhouse faculty development workshop on hybrid teaching. (The professional development workshop is something we cover in detail later in the book.) Of particular value for this workshop is that it is offered in the hybrid mode. So, as the UW-Milwaukee website notes, the workshop “involves several face-to-face workshops interspersed and integrated with online learning activities. As a result, faculty directly experience a hybrid course as students would, and are exposed to good examples of hybrid course design and teaching practices” (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, “Hybrid Courses”).

Another excellent professional resource, geared primarily to course-level design fundamentals, is the BlendKit workshop offered by the University of Central Florida (“Blended Learning Toolkit”). The Blended Learning Toolkit offers material for “Building Your Course” as well as model courses, design and delivery principles, along with other curricular design resources. These are openly available to any who visit the site. The University of Central Florida also offers its BlendKit material in the form of a MOOC (a massive, open, online course). The MOOC is free, unless you want your final portfolio to be evaluated so you can earn a certificate, in the form of a digital badge. (See our “Digital Badges” section in Chapter 3 for more on this.)

Yet another example of a strong hybrid learning Web presence is provided by Oregon State University’s (OSU) Hybrid Initiative. Their online hybrid learning hub provides instructors with a variety of materials to enable them to begin designing and then to teach a hybrid course on their campus (Oregon State University).

One section of the website provides a video explaining their “Hybrid Initiative,” a list of helpful resources about hybrid development, and the potential components of hybrid courses that will aid in student success. In another section, instructors can review some helpful templates for developing a hybrid, including an extensive list of helpful materials for instructors like planning charts, syllabus checklists, and approaches for developing a course schedule. Also provided is a set of narrated PowerPoints, videos, and course shells about effective hybrid course characteristics. Ultimately, the OSU Hybrid Initiative website is a valuable tool for instructors.

In short, there are a number of well-developed resources focused primarily on course-level specifics. We would just as soon direct interested readers to these resources than try to duplicate them here. What we are much more concerned with, though, is that for all the effort that has been devoted to curricular design support, we have noticed a glaring absence of guidance for institutions that want to develop, and sustain, a vibrant hybrid curricula. We feel that without the broader focus and institutional planning that we argue for here, even the best-designed classes are liable to exist in a vacuum within an institution. How will what works in one particular course be communicated to others teaching in the hybrid mode? And to be realistic, how will that well-designed course come into being if there is no institutional support in the form of faculty training and development in place? Furthermore, how will that great hybrid course be nurtured if there is not an institutional vision and framework there to support it? How will students even know it exists? In the end, how can an institution leverage great *individual* hybrid course design and teaching if there are no mechanisms in place to do so?

Having asserted that we’ll be taking a broad, institution-level view for our work, though, we will be relatively narrowly focused on the type of “hybrid” instructional setting we will be discussing. We will not explore the HyFlex model in further detail, for example. Nor will we consider in detail blended programs that involve a mix of courses that are entirely either online or face-to-face. Our focus will be on the hybrid course, like first-year composition, for example, that combines face-to-face, onsite

classroom instruction with distance-based, online learning in one unified learning experience.

So the present work takes a broad, institution-level view for making hybrids effective, though our focus remains on one fairly particular type of hybrid. And with the jingoism aside, we do see this hybrid model as a particularly promising instructional mode for the future.

Hybrid Learning—Its Lifecycle at Your Institution as Challenge and Opportunity

Truthfully, no matter how far into its lifecycle either hybrid or online instruction is at any given institution, that institution can increase the effectiveness of its hybrid curricular development and professional support by addressing some of the fundamental questions and challenges posed throughout this work.

But our sense is that most institutions in higher education have a history of online curricular development and course delivery that stretches much further back than does the history of hybrid curricular development and delivery, where such histories exist at all of course. So it is useful to consider these instructional setting lifecycles, even in general terms, because doing so can throw into sharp relief why early planning efforts—though potentially challenging—can prove so beneficial in the long run, for it is precisely this early institutional planning phase that was missing as online curricula developed at so many schools.

What the trajectory of online learning shows us, at least as it exists for many institutions today, is what we might be able to do differently, early on, so that hybrid learning develops along an alternate, and more positive, trajectory.

We recognize, though, that some institutions have neither a history of hybrid *nor* online learning. Other institutions have a history of nothing but online learning. And still others have experienced a history of online learning that *did* include an early period of concentrated, cross-institution planning and coordination, though we imagine that this is by far the minority. So the lifecycle picture we paint is, admittedly, a broad one, and not

applicable to every single institution across higher education, but we think it is instructive nonetheless.

Speaking in those broad terms, many institutions might find in their own history of online learning a lack of early planning. Acknowledging the considerable resources it requires to play institutional catch-up might provide exactly the impetus that is needed to undertake the sometimes challenging task of building a framework for hybrid learning success across an institution early on. Institutions may even benefit from taking a pause in the curricular development race in order to solidify such a framework.

So the basic question of why even bother with all the planning we suggest here, and why invest the time and effort in working through the challenges we discuss, is, we think, largely answered when we look at online learning. Without early investment in planning for sustainable effectiveness, institutions are just asking for headaches down the road.

Hybrid learning, as one learning mode among others that are available in higher education, is today in a situation much like the one that online learning found itself in around the late 1990s and the early 2000s. For many institutions, online learning began when a few colleagues across a campus, maybe one or two from different departments, began investigating what it would mean to incorporate an online component into their courses. The “learning management system” in these cases often amounted to a series of Web resources that an individual professor might develop and manage for his or her own specific purposes. There was nothing to say that the platform or digital tools that one professor used would be the same as those used by any other professor.

Often, it was then these individuals who became, by default, online leaders on campus, or at the very least the so-called “technology people” in their given departments. And great teaching certainly occurred. But at least in its earliest phases at many schools, teaching with technology was not something that happened within a broad institutional framework or shared vision. It was not systematically supported. There were few, if any, resources devoted to supporting online students, beyond of course the individual teaching faculty member him- or herself. And there may have been few systems in place to enable supportive, collaborative discussion among teaching faculty across disciplines,

outside of informal hallway conversations. We were struck, for example, by a comment we received in our 2014 survey on hybrid learning, in which a respondent noted that “[w]e don’t have an official ‘hybrid’ programs [*sic*] on the books, but many of us teach courses marked “hybrid” through our registrar, meaning they meet f2f part of the time and online part of the time” (Paull and Snart). This describes what, for many institutions, marked the early phases of online teaching. And it is precisely at this somewhat scattered moment that the institution as a whole can take stock of its hybrid offerings and work to develop a plan moving forward.

But from early, often fragmented, beginnings in online teaching, things changed. Teaching with technology, as a practice undertaken by a few faculty distributed randomly across a campus, began to coalesce into “online learning,” which was teaching with technology but with wider institutional visibility (though not necessarily institutional support). A 2011 Sloan-C (now called the Online Learning Consortium) publication notes that over its years of producing reports on online learning, from 2002 to the present, the number of chief academic officers who identify online learning as a key component of institutional long-range planning has grown steadily. In fact, only about 10 percent of institutions report that online learning is *not* now critical to long-term strategy: and this 10 percent is an all-time low (Allen and Seaman 4). The increasing degree to which online learning figures into institutional planning suggests how it *now* enjoys significant visibility at the institutional level on many campuses, despite what might have been relatively humble and unorganized beginnings.

What evolved from those early, individual, largely faculty-driven efforts with technology, broadly speaking, may have looked different at various institutions, of course, but the general shape of online learning as it has developed as a force in higher education is relatively uniform. As institutions realized that offering courses online was important for students but also a significant piece of their financial, or strategic, planning, they raced to offer as many courses as they could in hopes of garnering market share before new competitors appeared on the scene. Operating on the first-mover principle, many institutions looked to capture at least

part of the online-education market not necessarily by being one of the *best* in the field but by being one of the first.

Thus, from what might have been relatively humble, even casual, beginnings, we've seen a boom in online education: more courses, taught by more faculty, both full- and part-time, offered in more variable formats, all under the auspices of serving students by providing diverse course offerings, but lost in that framing can be other imperatives that connect online course enrollment and delivery just with an institution's financial situation.

What many institutions face today is an online curriculum that is not particularly well monitored or managed, or at least that did not emerge from an early phase of concerted institutional planning and preparation. So now, at any given institution that features a significant online curriculum, there are probably some good online courses but often far more that are not up to current standards and thus serving neither students nor faculty very well. There are probably also good online teachers, though often there are few established venues for them to collaborate and to share successes and challenges related specifically to their work online. Instructional design and teaching evaluations for online courses may also be ineffective and, where the two are not separated, unable to distinguish between problems of design and problems of instruction.

Further, various online teachers may have vastly different professional training and, in fact, very different ideas about what an online course should be and how it should be taught. Administrators now tasked with managing online programs and professional support systems may have little to no experience actually designing, teaching, or taking online courses. And faculty and administrators may have decidedly different ideas about how best to serve students using the online platform.

Certainly not *all* of these problems exist at every institution of higher education. But our experience leads us to believe that many of these problems can be found, sometimes in fairly acute form, at schools that have some of their curriculum online. Among the various issues related to online learning that confront institutions, evaluation seems to be a particularly sticky problem. Some schools still use course and instructor evaluation tools that were designed for the traditional, f2f classroom teaching and learn-

ing situation. One instructor has even commented to us, off the record: “Essentially, my institution scans the [student survey] forms into an electronic form and the questions are identical to the f2f sections of the course. It’s bizarre” (Anonymous, email correspondence). We have heard of cases of online students being asked to answer course evaluation questions about an online instructor’s “punctuality.” Or online students are asked about instructor availability both “inside” and “outside” of class.

One notable result of lax planning efforts to support online curricular growth are the poor success, retention, and completion rates for online learning, which are cited with great regularity, particularly by those who are skeptical of online learning to begin with. One study from the Community College Research Consortium at Columbia University notes that “students who took a given course online had estimated withdrawal rates that were 10 to 15 percentage points higher than students who took the course face-to-face” (Xu and Jaggars).

And summarizing findings from studies that tracked tens of thousands of students from the Virginia and Washington State community college systems, Jaggars writes that “regardless of academic subject or course, demographics, or academic background, the same student performs more poorly in a fully-online course than in a face-to-face course” (Jaggars).

Of course, relatively lower success or retention rates for online courses are not singularly the product of poor institutional planning early in the development of an online curriculum. And we should also pause here to note that the problem of student retention and success in the online format is complicated. Poor student success is not necessarily the result of problems with a particular course or teacher, *per se*. Often, poor student success has as much to do with why students opt for the online setting to begin with. How often, for example, does the student who would never consider taking a particular course in the f2f mode, because he or she does not have time to devote to it, choose the online setting rather than not take the class at all? As many educators know, this is a withdrawal or failure just waiting to happen, and obviously skews the online success numbers in a negative direction, seemingly regardless of what we might do once that student is in a course.

So we cannot control student decision making, even bad decision making, in any absolute sense. And yet this situation is maybe not so far removed from the problem of institutional planning, even though it seems rather student-specific. For example, what effect would better academic advising, or even mandatory learner preparedness certification make in this case? What if a student who planned to take an online course, even though he or she has no time in the day (or night) to devote to coursework, had to consult with an academic advisor as part of the registration process? Or what if some kind of online learning orientation were required that made it abundantly clear to this student that learning online would be at least as much work, if not more, as taking the class face-to-face? What if there were robust *online* support systems available that included academic tutoring?

Maybe none of this keeps the student from registering and subsequently doing poorly. But such resources might increase the likelihood that a student makes informed, and thus beneficial, decisions about what classes to take and when. And even when student registration decisions are not the best, good student support can help that student succeed postregistration. Neither a student-centered registration system nor robust student support systems emerge out of nothing, of course. When they are in place, and effective, they have likely emerged from a concerted institutional effort to develop and implement them. Thus institutional planning might have a considerable impact on student success, even in cases where an individual instructor has done everything in his or her power to support student learning online and to construct an engaging, vibrant course.

But untangling the problem of online retention is not really the point at issue. In fact, what we want to note is precisely how hard it seems to be to address the apparent success-gap between online and f2f courses. There are so many variables at work that the problem often seems intractable.

Regardless, a significant contributing factor is online learning's institutional history, assuming that that history mirrors what is described above: some early years of little or no broad institutional vision, followed by boom years where administrative desires to have everything online yesterday propelled both teachers

and teaching online with little or no professional oversight, training, or continuing development, and now a present of trying to get the horses back in the barn.

This is *not* the future we would like to see for hybrid learning.

What we are arguing, in fact, is that the hybrid mode seems particularly promising precisely because of its relatively youthful existence in higher education. We may even be seeing growth in online learning finally plateau (see Parry). Such a plateau may open the door for interest in other delivery formats. To put it even more bluntly, maybe now is the right time for institutional resources to be directed at a variety of learning formats where previously it seems that at most institutions online curriculum development always received the lion's share of money and attention.

Institutions that find themselves in the early stages of designing and offering hybrid classes, while challenged to create a shared institutional framework, might nonetheless be ideally situated to implement effective principles and practices since they are not expending valuable energy trying to corral an existing curriculum back into some system of professional oversight. Nor are they trying to retrofit courses with effective instructional and pedagogical practices that otherwise emerged from a series of curriculum-building years that featured little quality control.

Thinking about hybrid learning now, in its relatively early history as a learning mode across most of higher education, is especially important because it is at this point that schools need to begin working toward a shared institutional vision for what hybrid learning can and will be. If there is something that is missing in the history of online learning, as it exists for so many institutions today, it is an early phase of institutional planning. Not just financial or strategic planning . . . but pedagogic planning.

Such planning can be challenging and often resource intensive. But the investment is well worth the effort. This book provides strategies for institutional planning so that hybrid teaching and learning can be both effective and sustainable, and so that challenges read, at least in part, as opportunities for successful long-term curricular growth and student success.

Making Hybrids Work: An Institutional Framework

What should institutions be thinking about, and have in place, in order to increase the likely effectiveness of hybrid curricular offerings?

There are a number of answers to this question, but as we will see, most aspects of creating a solid institutional framework for successful hybrid curriculum development and delivery are interlinked. And often the development of such a framework will be challenging. This might be why too many institutions focus too heavily on getting courses up and running and available in the registration system—in whatever format—quickly, rather than laying the necessary groundwork to truly support new curricular design. Indeed our book title, *Making Hybrids Work*, is meant to suggest the more obvious sense of making hybrids effective, but also the less obvious sense of the work it takes to make those hybrids effective. Our goal is to try to suggest a plan for hybrid curricular development, but not to suggest that there is an “Easy” button to make it all happen.

As is often the case, though, with challenge comes opportunity. The fundamental opportunity that higher education institutions can capitalize on by undertaking the sometimes complicated work of establishing a sound institutional framework to support curricular development is sustainability. Yes, it is possible through various short-term incentives and institutional initiatives to create buzz around hybrid teaching and even to coax a few faculty into trying the hybrid mode out. Students might be enticed with public marketing about a “new” and “flexible” learning format. But that short-term thinking, though it could produce a good hybrid course or two and boost enrollment for a semester, will not produce an institutional framework capable of sustaining ongoing professional and curricular development. Nor will short-term efforts likely produce long-term student success or instructor satisfaction. To be sure, generating a little short-term buzz, maybe couched in the generic language of “innovation,” is relatively easy: hire a guest speaker to address faculty, sponsor a workshop presented by an outside agency, post shiny fliers around campus or mount a few Web banners . . . these kinds of

strategies can work to garner attention. But what, in the long run, has an institution really accomplished?

We are much more interested in having institutions create a strong framework for sustainability. This can be more challenging, but ultimately more rewarding, than short-term focus on getting more hybrid courses on the books and more students in the seats as fast as possible.

We should pause here to note just how commonsensical it may seem on the one hand to develop a framework for sustained success as a necessary precursor to relatively simple curricular growth. And yet many administrators, instructors, and support staff probably know from firsthand experience just how much pressure can be felt to “grow enrollment” or “diversify learning modes.” Such mandates, formal or informal, are generally about capturing market share: how to get more students, or customers, through the physical or virtual campus doorways. Indeed, some of us know what it is like to receive enrollment reports, segmented by division or academic area across a college, and see enrollment growth (or decline) conspicuously color coded: green if enrollment is up and red if enrollment is down. Color coded for easy visual navigation? Probably not. Rather, color coded to denote that growth is good, decline requires a warning. Figure 1 shows the “Legend” that accompanied what used to be called enrollment “Scorecards” at Jason Snart’s home institution.

Our grayscale image is a little less ominous than the scorecard itself, which circulated in full color. The shaded area, at the far right, which indicates enrollment decline, would appear in red when the scorecards were distributed among faculty and administration.

FTE stands for full-time equivalent (e.g., two part-time student course loads might combine to count as a single “full-time

Legend				
Number FTEs Change				
≥10 FTEs	4 to 9 FTEs	3 to -3 FTEs	-4 to -9 FTEs	≤ -10 FTEs
Percent FTEs Change				
≥ 30%	10% to 29%	9% to -9%	-10% to -29%	≤ -30%

FIGURE 1. A sample enrollment “scorecard.”

equivalent”). The way in which these enrollment reports were color coded was problematic enough, for many, but to even refer to them as a “scorecard” seemed fundamentally the wrong kind of analogy. It implied that each academic area was in contest with all others. And further, there were implied connotations behind a good versus a bad “score.” The report was segmented by academic area and thus the message seemed all too clear when your area ended up in the cautionary amber, or worse, the emergency red, end of the “scoring” spectrum. (These scorecards are no longer circulated, by the way.)

So sure, it is easy enough to agree *in theory* that we sometimes need to put the brakes on enrollment or curricular growth, but in the everyday practice of teaching and learning, and via the often not-so-subtle cues we receive about the importance of continued growth, such clear thinking does not always produce concurrent practical institutional action.

One argument we’d like to make, and that might enable productive conversations at your institution, involves scalability. This is the framework that will often appeal to those whose job it is to actively grow enrollment and thus who are motivated to always get bigger as a way of getting better.

Scalability means that what is effective in one or two courses can be replicated across many courses. We are not arguing, of course, for strict design or instructional uniformity. Any good teacher knows that uniformity is not what produces good learning. We are suggesting rather that time invested in laying a strong foundation for building hybrid curricula, while it may slow the process of “growth” in the near future, stands to benefit an institution many times over in the long run. What long-range vision produces will, we hope, include consistently well-trained and motivated faculty who are developing quality courses that engage students and that produce meaningful, deep learning. We also know that what informs students’ decisions about what classes, teachers, and delivery modes to take is word of mouth. No, this is not the only factor in students’ planning decisions, but it is, in our experience, often overlooked, sometimes inadvertently though sometimes not. A few hybrid courses, designed in a rush to meet so-called demand, are less likely to provide a good experience

to the students who enroll than might courses designed within a well-planned and thoughtful institutional framework. Whatever the case, though, that student experience will be communicated to friends and peers, either directly in person or via word of digital mouth (think here postings on social media and sites like *ratemyprofessor.com*). Whatever brief enrollment growth blip that those hastily created hybrid courses enabled is unlikely to be duplicated if the experience was not good for faculty or for students.

Our suggestion is that in cases where significant institutional energy is devoted to “growth”—i.e., enrollment must be up each and every semester—even the best-intentioned arguments to slow down might not be very productive. The resulting “conversation” may be all too familiar to faculty and administrators alike: two sides seeming to speak a completely different language. We are suggesting that rather than eschewing the idea of growth entirely, we might find common ground by taking the longer view. Slowing down in the short term will produce sustainable growth in the long term. That might be a conversation that actually gets us somewhere.

Also, when it comes to thinking deeply and broadly across an institution about how to build and support a hybrid curriculum, we can not always provide single answers that will suit all learning situations. In fact, though we make the attempt to direct attention in specific ways throughout this work, we are ultimately not interested in being overly prescriptive, at least not when it comes to the true nuts and bolts of hybrid teaching. On the contrary, we feel that institutions will, by and large, have to think about how to support hybrid curriculum development and enable sustainable faculty engagement, collaboration, and communication in ways that make sense *for that institution*. We lay out a possible development roadmap in the next section, for example, but the specifics will have to emerge from individual campus realities.

Furthermore, in order that teaching remain focused on pedagogy, and not technology, we believe that teaching faculty will be best positioned to make individual choices about what might work, and what might not work, in their hybrid courses. Rarely will a one-size-fits-all approach produce effective results since institutions can be so different, and even those that share

characteristics in common may have different visions for how hybrid learning will fit into a long-range plan.

We truly believe, however, that successful hybrid course design and teaching need to happen in the context of a shared institutional vision for what hybrid learning is, who needs to be involved, its goals, and how it will be administered on campus. This overarching assertion applies to all kinds of institutional situations.

An Institutional Roadmap

The following relatively simple visual flowchart represents what a process for sustainable institutional change might look like, as opposed to change that unfolds haphazardly and is as likely as not to lose momentum before ever becoming a recognized feature of the college or university.

We have modified Figure 2 from presentation materials developed by Una Daly and Kate Hess. Daly is the director of curriculum design and college outreach for the Open Education Consortium, an international community of organizations and institutions that promotes open education, including the adoption of open educational resources (like free, open textbooks, for example). Hess is library coordinator and a faculty member at Kirkwood College, a two-year college in Iowa. Their work does not address hybrid or blended learning directly, but in their efforts to champion the adoption of open educational resources by various institutions— institutions often hesitant about, and even resistant to, potentially disruptive instructional tools—they have ample experience thinking about major institutional change.

As such, the roadmap they offer, which represents a process for facilitating large-scale change, seems equally well suited to our purposes here. We have adapted their materials, but the fundamental idea remains: to facilitate what can be a challenging, even seemingly overwhelming process, by mapping out discrete steps that involve intentional planning and implementation phases, with an iterative phase of review and assessment.

We like this basic roadmap for a number of reasons. First, as Figure 2 shows, we start with an initial phase of needs assessment. We like this question of need in particular because it encourages

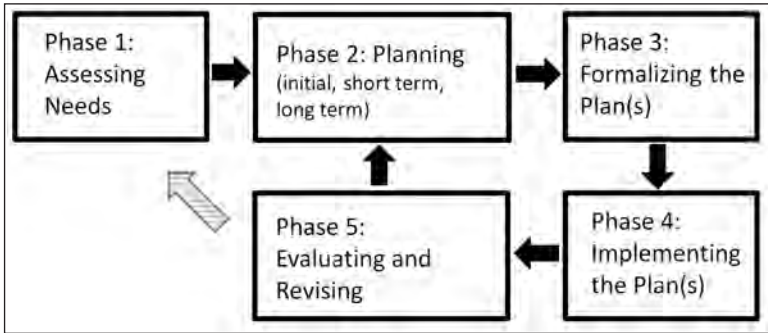


FIGURE 2. *A process for institutional change (adapted from Daly and Hess).*

an institution to take one step backwards, rather than rushing to move forward, by asking whether change is really needed at all. Or, to put it more productively, what problems are we looking to solve, what systems are we looking to improve, what are we looking to do better, by undertaking institutional change? We like starting from a place that does not just presuppose that institutional change is always, *de facto*, a good or necessary thing. Is change motivated by identifiable needs, as this initial needs assessment phase might indicate, or is change motivated by some perceived need to keep up with the academic Joneses? It is during this phase that we'd like to see concerted efforts at fact-finding from a broad range of constituents, be they faculty, administration, students, support staff, the community at large . . . whatever makes sense for your particular institutional situation.

We hope that an initial phase of assessing institutional needs will in fact streamline later phases, which will reflect exactly how and why developing hybrid curricula makes institutional sense. We are also convinced that early needs assessments help to ground potentially disruptive institutional change in a meaningful framework. Big change does not have to seem to some like yet another round of pouring institutional resources into the next great overhyped panacea for higher education, whatever flavor of the month that happens to be. Institutional effort, which is always of course really people hours of work, will ideally make sense when it is framed as responding to an identified need, a real problem to be addressed.

The planning phase, Phase 2 in the figure, is potentially the messiest. But hopefully the good kind of messy. Not combative messy, but brainstorming messy. Many ideas, not necessarily fleshed out. Many questions, not necessarily answered yet. A good Phase 2 will be hard to manage, but that is intentionally so. We like an identifiable phase of generating ideas before trying to formalize plans (which will come next).

Phase 2 could also involve a lot of different individuals and groups on campus, each with different imperatives, preconceptions, and constraints. Phase 2 will probably involve the formation of at least one, though likely more than one, committee charged with taking what came of needs assessment efforts and asking more questions, brainstorming strategies, and exploring what impact developing hybrid curricula might have across the college.

Phase 2 will morph into Phase 3 at some point, as committees and working groups begin to formalize ideas from early brainstorming efforts into actionable next steps. Both Phases 2 and 3 are valuable since part of what they do, even if only as a byproduct of their primary purposes, is to encourage institutional buy-in to the idea of curricular change. This is not to suggest that in developing hybrid courses that are well represented and supported by the institution at large each and every faculty member must be pressed to teach in the blended format. We would never advocate for that. But if hybrids are to become a recognized and valued piece of your institution, even those not interested in actually designing or teaching them should understand why resources are being invested in curricular change. Buy-in does not mean that everybody now does the new thing. It simply means that everybody is given the chance to have their input heard.

In fact, an important part of the early phases of institutional change is to reassure those who are *not* a direct part of that process that their work is not now somehow marginalized or obsolete. Investing in the development of hybrid learning within an institutional framework should not be perceived as a zero sum game: that is, if hybrid learning gains institutional importance, then traditional classroom teaching loses institutional importance. An inclusive Phase 2 and 3 should help to mitigate this mistaken perception.

We then find ourselves where the rubber meets the road: Phase 4—Implementation. With early planning phases having outlined clear needs and strategies to address those needs, it is time to task groups and individuals—probably far fewer than were involved in previous phases—with enacting change. This may start with professional development (a topic we cover at length later in this book). Implementation will also include marketing efforts to publicize hybrid learning within the college community and beyond, especially once well-designed courses and well-trained faculty are ready to go. Phase 4 will probably also involve an aspect of institutional change we address in greater detail below: finding your campus champions. Again, this group will include far fewer numbers than might have been asked to provide input during early planning phases. To make implementation actually happen, those with the energy and enthusiasm for hybrid learning will need to be given the opportunity to enact change. Undoubtedly, administrators with institutional leverage will have to use it. All previous planning phases have led to this moment, though, so when change happens it need not appear arbitrary, opaque, or autocratic.

Especially if institutional change is likely to be disruptive on your campus, it will be important to follow implementation closely with what Phase 5 involves: evaluation and revision. This will provide the kind of transparency that sustainable institutional change needs. Phase 5 will give stakeholders the opportunity to assess what effects change has had, both positive and negative, and will mark the chance to revise plans.

We particularly like how the flowchart brings us back to a needs assessment phase, since needs can easily change from one semester or year to another, and it will be important for an institution to revisit not just *how* it is working to develop and support hybrid learning but also, perhaps most fundamentally, *why*. We do not take this question as a foregone conclusion, though it is certainly our contention that the hybrid format has much to offer.

The hybrid instructional mode, which combines online and face-to-face learning in a single course, has, according to the National Education Association, the potential to maximize student learning in the twenty-first century. And interest in hybrids is growing—by administrators, by faculty, and by students. But a truly effective hybrid curriculum works only when colleges and universities invest in broad, institutional planning and decision making, as well as strong professional development opportunities for faculty.

Making Hybrids Work provides a resource for institutions of higher education to grow and sustain quality hybrid curricula, outlining an institutional framework by focusing on defining and advertising hybrids; developing, supporting, and assessing hybrid programs; and training faculty. To examine the reality rather than the hype of a hybrid curriculum, authors Joanna N. Paull and Jason Allen Snart look at several existing hybrid courses in a variety of disciplines, as well as explore the possibilities and limitations of teaching with technology. Although there is no one easy path to instituting a hybrid curriculum, the authors argue that the hybrid model might well offer a potential “best of both worlds” in its blending of online and face-to-face instruction, but only with a strong foundation of institutional planning and professional support in place.

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