Sustaining Innovation:

* Within the world of education, there is definitely room for some improvement within pre-existing technologies and ideas. One idea for a sustaining innovation could be to enable study groups via video conferencing software within this current age of Covid-19. One of the things many students are probably missing right now, is the ability to gain sufficient levels of help in some very challenging courses that they are currently trying to grind through from their bedrooms. In an effort to help mitigate the effects and challenges of remote education, professors would essentially set up scheduled informal zoom calls, as a space for students to help each other. Each potential session would also pertain to a different topic, as a means of limiting the spectrum of possible questions in one sitting. The kicker here, is that since this is meant to be a ‘crowd sourced’ effort via students and not glorified office hours, students who understand any given session topic well, can sign up to be an aid/facilitator for extra credit. Now to prevent students from simply signing up to be an aid for extra credit while not actually helping others (although there would be limited slots), the students receiving help would use a Kritik type software to grade the help of the aids for that specific session. In this way, professors and students can all benefit from an opportunity to help each other in an accountable fashion, without the direct intervention of the professor. While this doesn’t completely bridge the gap between remote and in-person learning, this new dynamic can drastically help those who are typically accustomed to working in study groups.

Breakthrough Innovation:

* When thinking of possible breakthrough innovations within the world of education, one doesn’t have to look much further than the flawed communication channels between professors and students. In a world where dozens of social media apps with a bevy of different features exist, we still insist on mostly using email to communicate with each other within academic circles. There are many students who might send a message and not hear back from their professor for 2-3 days, which in most cases is simply too long. While many instructors are obviously busy, one of the main reasons for the delay in communication is because of the general infrequency with which most “check their emails”. While we get emails on our smart devices, and can obviously get notifications, our time spent on other apps/platforms/etc. far outweighs that with which we spend on our emails. That is why I’m proposing the idea of an app that is strictly made for professors to communicate with students. It would be an instant messaging app, where students would register with their names & University IDs, and would update for communication potential based on a professor’s current roster of students on a semester to semester basis (So I couldn’t accidentally send a message to the wrong professor, or receive/send spam). Then, each message that a student potentially sends, would be color-coded based on priority, and each professor would have a separate folder for each different coded priority. This would help to alleviate one of the major issues with an outdated technology like email, which is that there’s currently no way for a professor to differentiate which emails are urgent from those that aren’t, unless it says so explicitly within the Subject. So, a professor can now look at their hypothetical inboxes and see “2 code red messages (most urgent), 5 code yellow messages (intermediate importance), and 4 code green messages (not an urgent matter)”. So, on top of boosting the quality of the communication by swapping out email for instant messaging accessibility, professors would now be able to blatantly see which messages need prompt responses. Such an idea like this, truly helps all stakeholders, as both instructors and students would have a clear pathway to enhance their communication capabilities.

Disruptive Innovation:

* One of the most well-known issues within the realm of general education is the fact that there are many students who cram more than they learn in any given course. The flaws in this approach don’t really need to be elaborated upon, because it should be obvious that academic approaches would ideally equate to long term knowledge being achieved rather than “short term gains”. For professors and instructors who obviously devote months of their lives over the course of a semester or year, having their students not absorb most of the knowledge and information they’re trying to share is the complete and utter opposite of their actual intentions. While it may be difficult to ensure this is reversable for all students, one idea for a disruptive education could be to have a system strictly based on seminars, assignments, and essays. Now, I know this is mostly only feasible in most non-STEM fields, but such a disruption would truly be revolutionary. If you genuinely, think about it, many students show up to class to take notes, and receive information to achieve some grade on an exam that then translates to an arbitrary letter grade at the end of the semester that doesn’t even come close to accounting for the bevy of different variables in play that ultimately surmount to this final accumulation. Especially in lecture-heavy classes, it’s quite possible for a student to show up to class (and not even that sometimes), and not a say a single word for 5 months, and still receive an A. Isn’t the system inherently flawed if everything the student does is almost entirely produced from the effort they put in outside of the physical classroom. By having a seminar style format for these types of classes, you push each student to be held accountable for being able to share what they’ve been learning to the entire class, and hopefully build a dialogue with others about relevant topics. I’ve always felt that one of the best ways to confirm what you have learned, is to be able to explain it to others, and a seminar style class is entirely based on that very concept. Essays would also elaborate on this concept further, allowing students to cohesively explain what they’ve learned, without the ridiculous ‘timed’ pressure that most in-person exams enforce.