Solutions and Evaluation Plan: Smart Hill Community College

Kacey Wochna

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Enrollment at Small Hill Community College, a two-year college located in Indiana, has been declining for the past decade, and low enrollment now threatens the existence of the college. The Board of Trustees has decided on a particular solution to the problem of low enrollment: Smart Hill Community College will make all of its core courses available online in order to appeal to a broader student population. Within five years, full-time faculty members (30% of the college faculty) were to have designed, developed, and launched online versions of their courses. Four years into the project, however, only 27% of the courses are online. Some faculty members have either not begun the transition or have not finished transitioning, despite having attended training workshops presented by the Ed Tech team overseeing the project. (All background is from the case study, "Transition to Teaching Online").

Performance Analysis

An analysis of the context revealed the following as root causes of the performance problem:

- **Not enough time to complete the task**: Faculty have no prior experience with online education, so figuring out how to transition their courses is time-consuming and effortful. Yet, faculty members are expected to do this in addition to their regular work responsibilities. Further, only 30% of the faculty is full-time. The number of courses that need to be transitioned may greatly outnumber the faculty responsible for transitioning them, resulting in a significant burden. Faculty would need to seriously overextend themselves to complete both their old and new tasks.

- **No incentives for transitioning or consequences for not transitioning**: Some faculty have chosen to focus on prior responsibilities rather than transition due to the general

neglect of performance by supervisors. Faculty who have transitioned their courses have not had their effort acknowledged in any way, not has anything happened to faculty who have ignored the task. Aside from appreciation of the importance of the task, which only some faculty have, there has been no substantive reason to participate in the transition.

- **No support from department chairs**: Response to the project from chairs has ranged from uninterested to resistant. Department chairs do not value online education and have been unwilling to support faculty who are trying to transition their courses. In fact, participating in the transition is viewed as somewhat subversive, so compliant faculty risk straining their relationships with their chairs.

- **Lack of learning and performance supports:** Faculty members do not know how to design, develop, and implement online courses, but the training workshops offered by the Ed Tech team do not align with the skill gaps of the faculty. Faculty are willing to learn through self-study, but because adequate reference resources are not available, faculty are wasting time searching for answers to their questions. The provided technical support service is understaffed and faculty have difficulty getting access to a specialist.

Recommended Interventions

The focus of this plan is on non-learning interventions. As noted above, lack of skill and knowledge is a root cause of the problem: there is much that the faculty does not know about teaching online, and the existing training is inadequate. However, I am not proposing revised training, not only because it is beyond the scope of this plan but also because I am not confident that more training would be a worthwhile investment at this late stage. The interventions posed should facilitate faculty self-study while reducing the overall need for additional training.

Performance Aids	
Intervention	Electronic Performance Support System
Problem	Faculty cannot successfully develop courses due to a lack of learning and performance supports
Target	Faculty (Transition Team only, see Elimination of Task Interferences)
Explanation	Faculty have many technical questions about building their courses in the LMS, so they call the technical support service. Due to this call volume, the tech support line is always busy. Unable to reach tech support, faculty waste time searching the internet. Faculty are self-directed but frustrated by how hard it is to get answers. Because faculty likely have many of the same questions, a centralized reference site with a question and answer forum will provide answers more quickly without increasing tech support requirements, since answers to questions will be available for all to see. An EPSS is appropriate because faculty must be able to perform (i.e., build courses) expertly without having previously learned how to do so (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 132).
Implementation	The EPSS can be built within the existing LMS by the tech support service to take advantage of the widespread familiarity with this tool. The site will feature a collaborative question and answer forum monitored by tech support. Faculty will also be able to respond to one another's questions, further decreasing the burden for tech support and creating a community of practice among the faculty. The EPSS will also include documentation for the LMS and links to some instructional materials on online teaching. (Appendix A)
Environmental	
Intervention	Elimination of Task Interferences
Problem	Faculty do not have time to transition courses because there have been no changes to their other required tasks.
Target	All Faculty

Explanation	Faculty are faced with "conflicting priorities," because the task of transitioning their courses must be done in addition to their regular responsibilities (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 124). The extra work required is especially significant as it falls to only a fraction of the faculty (full-timers). Some faculty are interested in the project while others would prefer to continue with their previous responsibilities, so the work can be more efficiently divided by creating a Transition Team of those "most capable and desirous of performing" (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 124). This will reduce the work and resources required because fewer faculty members will be doing something new. Interested adjunct faculty will be invited to join the Transition Team in order to further spread the work around.
Implementation	Each department will nominate at least one person interested in online education to join the Transition Team. The Transition Team will focus on transitioning all of the core courses in their departments. Their other responsibilities, including face-to-face teaching loads, will be picked up by faculty who are not interested in online education. Adjunct faculty will be encouraged to participate by transitioning their own courses, and interested adjuncts will be welcomed to join the Transition Team (Appendix B; see Provision of Incentives/Consequences for more information about opportunities for adjuncts).

Emotional		
Intervention	Enhancement of Motivation	Provision of Incentives/ Consequences
Problem	Faculty receive no support from department chairs because the chairs do not value the project.	Faculty have no concrete reasons to participate in the transition.
Target	Department Chairs	All Faculty
Explanation	The chairs have a strong preference for traditional, face-to-face education and have not embraced the idea of offering online courses. Chairs have denied support requests from faculty because they do not appreciate the need for the transition. Chairs have direct influence over the work environment and priorities of the faculty and yet no effort has been made to bring	Faculty who complied with the request to transition their courses were not positively acknowledged by anyone at the college. In fact, some were socially punished for going against the will of their chairs. Meanwhile, there were no consequences for ignoring the request. Not transitioning has been the path of least resistance. Identifiable rewards and consequences for both chairs and

	the chairs on board with the project. To motivate the chairs, the Provost and the Ed Tech team will host a meeting to demonstrate the "impact of performance on personal career" (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 129). Motivation will be further reinforced and sustained through department-level incentives (see Provision of Incentives/Consequences).	faculty will help motivate those are not fully motivated by value. Even on a meager budget, there are numerous ways the college can create "career enhancement opportunities" for those who participate in the transition (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004, p. 129).
Implementation	The Provost and Ed Tech team will meet with all the department chairs. The Provost will share economic projections on how falling enrollment will result in the failure of the college. The Provost will clarify that programs will have to be cut if courses are not transitioned, and will emphasize that online courses will support the continuation of face-to-face courses. The Ed Tech team will present data on the benefits of e-learning, including examples of successful programs at other community colleges. A sample of faculty who have already transitioned will be invited to share their courses and answer questions about the process (Appendix C).	Approval of department budgets will be contingent on success in transitioning courses, with increases for those departments that transition all of their courses and cuts for those that do not make progress. Tenure and promotion guidelines will be adjusted to accommodate faculty who volunteer for the Transition Team, and Transition Team faculty will be automatically eligible for tenure-clock extensions. Departments will be able to apply for grants from a Student Success fund that can be used to hire adjuncts to transition additional courses.

Evaluation

The plan for evaluating the suite of performance interventions is based on Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Because no formal learning interventions are proposed, no evaluation will be applied at Level 2 of the model. The remaining three levels evaluate reactions, behaviors, and results.

Level 1

The reactions of faculty to the interventions will be evaluated using a set of reaction surveys. Department chairs will receive paper surveys at the conclusion of their meeting with the

Provost and Ed Tech team. The survey will ask them to rate the clarity of the presentations, the

relevance of the material to their job, and their expectations for the success of the other planned

interventions, which is relevant for assessing initial buy-in. Transition Team faculty will receive

a paper survey at the end of their initial meeting with the Ed Tech team member asking them to

rate the relevance of the material, the helpfulness of the Ed Tech member, and the perceived

ease-of-use of the electronic performance support system. Both surveys will include space to

write in suggestions and concerns about the intervention plan.

Level 3

Changes in behavior will be evaluated at two time points: two months into the

intervention and six months into the intervention. Department chairs will receive surveys via

email with rating-based questions about changes in how they are supporting their faculty in

transitioning courses, as well as their impressions about the progress faculty are making towards

the transition. Because it is essential that the Transition Team feel they are getting the support

they need, they will be interviewed by a member of the Ed Tech team at two and six months.

They will be asked about changes in the support available to them from their chair and from

technical support, and about changes in their own work towards the transition. Chairs and

Transition Team faculty will thus provide feedback both about themselves and about the other.

Level 4

The results of the interventions will be evaluated by requiring department chairs to report

on their department's progress on a monthly basis. A short reporting form will be posted on one

of the college's existing workflow systems, and chairs will be reminded via email to report any

courses that were successfully transitioned during the month. Chairs will be responsible for this

reporting, rather than having faculty report their own completed courses, to increase the sense

that chairs are accountable for the success of the project. Departments making the most progress

will be acknowledged in monthly email announcements to enhance motivation. At six and twelve

months, the number of courses transitioned will be compared with the number transitioned prior

to the intervention. Because the period prior to the intervention was substantially longer,

matching or exceeding this number in the year after the intervention would be evidence of a

greatly increased rate of progress towards the goal of 100% completion.

References

Kirkpatrick, D. L. & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2006). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*.

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Stolovitch, H. D. & Keeps, E. J. (2004). *Training ain't performance*. Alexandria, VA: ASTD

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28237447_1/courses/wl_XLSY4201630/TransitiontoTeachingOnline.pdf

Appendix A

Electronic Performance Support System Development Requirements

Note: The actual learning management system used by Smart Hill Community College is

unknown. The details in these guidelines are based on Sakai (https://sakaiproject.org/).

Site Creation: In Sakai, add a new site named "Transition Team" and add all Transition Team

faculty as members using their college usernames. Select the following site tools to be active:

- Home

- Announcements

- Chat Room

- Forums

- Resources

- Search

- Web Content

Forums: Under "Forums," create two topics, one for "Technical Support Q & A" and one for

"Online Education Discussion." Indicate in the descriptions that the Technical Support Q &A

topic is for questions about building courses and using functions in Sakai, and the Online

Education Discussion is for general questions about teaching online and online course design. In

both, instruct faculty to give new conversations descriptive titles so that others with the same

question can easily identify the appropriate conversation, such as "How to change quiz auto-

grading settings." The Technical Support Q & A should be checked hourly by a member of the

technical support service staff. A member of the Ed Tech team should check the Online

Education Discussion daily and offer guidance as needed.

Web Content: The Sakai Instructor Guide automatically available through the Help menu,

however faculty may not readily identify this. Further, the built-in search function of the Help

menu does not work well. The official Sakai Community Documentation page, which is more

user-friendly, can be directly embedded using the web content tool and given the title "Course

Building Guide": http://sakai.screenstepslive.com/s/sakai_help

Resources: The Ed Tech team will assemble a collection of free online resources related to the

design and development of online courses, including tips from other community colleges. Some

examples are listed below.

- OER Commons: https://www.oercommons.org/

- Mesa Community College Center for Teaching and Learning, "Designing an Online

  Course": http://ctl.mesacc.edu/teaching/designing-an-online-course/

Chat Room: Whenever possible, a member of the technical support service staff should be

available in the chat room to answer immediate questions.

Appendix B

Guidelines for Transition Team Creation

All faculty will be informed of the plan to create a Transition Team through a college-wide announcement crafted by the Provost and Ed Tech team. Chairs will be responsible for organizing efforts within their departments and ensuring that their departments are meeting requirements.

Formation: Each department will nominate at least one full-time faculty member to join the Transition Team. Faculty who are interested in online education will be advised to volunteer for this position.

Ed Tech Guidelines: Each department's Transition Team member(s) will have a private meeting with a member of the Ed Tech team to discuss expectations and create a plan for the department's transition, including a reasonable timeline for the transition of all department courses. The Ed Tech team will also help the Transition Team to form small voluntary work groups, ideally composed of members from related departments, to provide faculty with a clear and relevant support network. The Ed Tech team will also host monthly work sessions, which should be guided by faculty concerns.

Department Guidelines: Departments will meet to reassign responsibilities among their members. Transition Team members will prepare lists of their prior responsibilities, including teaching assignments, committee memberships, etc. Transition Team member can choose to keep some of their prior responsibilities if they wish (for instance, continuing to mentor a student), but

chairs should encourage Transition Team members to resign most of their usual duties, with the assurance that responsibilities will be revisited after the transition is complete. Departments will be free to decide amongst themselves how to redistribute work. Departments will provide their Transition Team members will all available data on the courses to be transitioned, including granting access to existing course sites through the LMS. Faculty will be available to meet with the Transition Team members to discuss the details of their courses.

Transition Team Guidelines: Transition Team members will first work on transitioning their own courses, taking advantage of the electronic performance support system, collaboration within their work groups, and regular conferences with Ed Tech. Transition Team members will report to their chairs when they have completed a course. Once ready to transition courses other than their own, Transition Team members will contact the corresponding faculty member to discuss the design of the course. Faculty will be free to decide the level of their own involvement (some faculty, for instance, may want to design their own materials under the guidance of the Transition Team member), but at the very least must cooperate fully through sharing of materials and a willingness to answer questions.

Adjunct Guidelines: Adjunct faculty will be encouraged to transition their own courses, and any who decide to do so will be considered part of the Transition Team and granted resources accordingly.

Appendix C

Guidelines for Presentation to Department Chairs

Note: Details of the administrative hierarchy of Smart Hill Community College are unknown.

The Provost has been the point person in communications for this case and thus is used as an

example. This meeting should be hosted by the highest-ranking member of the administration

(e.g., the President) in order to emphasize the seriousness of this initiative.

The Provost and Ed Tech team will host a mandatory meeting for all department chairs

with the goal of persuading the chairs that the success of the online transition is crucial to the

continuation of the college and thus must be prioritized.

Meeting Outline

1. Provost presents detailed financial information about the dire situation of the college,

   economic projections based on falling enrollment, and an estimated timeline of program

   cuts concluding in the closure of the college

2. Provost presents data on the financial benefits of an online program, projections for

   online enrollment, and examples from successful programs at other community colleges

3. Ed Tech team presents research on the benefits of online education, emphasizing

   continued commitment to the college's academic standards

4. Two respected faculty members who have already transitioned courses present materials

   from their courses

5. Provost presents details of the implementation plan, highlighting the major actions

   required from chairs

6. Provost opens the floor for questions

7. Provost concludes by stressing that the online education initiative is the number one

    priority of the college because online courses will support the continuation of face-to-face

    courses and ultimately the existence of the college.