

White Paper on the Brandman iDEAL:
Instructional Design for Engaged Adult Learning
By Charles Bullock, JD, LL.M.
and Jennifer Tucker Klein, PhD



Instructional Design for Engaged Adult Learning



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

John Morioka rushes into the building, arriving just in time for the beginning of the class at 5:30 p.m. He listens to the professor, takes notes, reviews the material due to be turned in—and waits for the break. Finally, he grabs a bite to eat and wonders how he will make it until 10:30 at night. By 9:00, he is too tired to concentrate, but he manages to stay awake and get the assignments for the following week. During the week, he reads, works on his paper and makes notes of questions to ask the following week.

Maria Marco rushes to class. She meets with her teammates about the project they have been developing online. The professor opens the class session by asking Maria to lead the discussion on the article she found and shared online. Next, one of the class teams presents its initial research findings, which generates an engaged discussion among the class, and the three hours are soon over. Everyone is online throughout the next day, sharing their thoughts on the readings and questions posted.

In each scenario above, the adult student is a conscientious, eager learner. Both students juggle a full work and home life schedule as they strive to complete their college education and earn a degree. The difference between the two scenarios is the learning environment. Both scenarios feature the highly desirable face-to-face contact, but the latter provides the enhanced learning opportunities that come from a blended format combined with a course designed to engage the adult student. The blended format has been utilized by industry for more than 20 years, but only recently by universities and colleges. The Open University of the United Kingdom was one of the first higher education institutions to recognize the advantages of marrying technology to on-ground instruction. Since then, research has continued to demonstrate the promises of the blended model of engaged learning as the pedagogical modality that addresses the needs of both the adult student and the university by promising flexibility, innovation and higher levels of student learning and satisfaction.

What is blended learning?

When making a choice for a college degree, the three most pressing issues for the adult student are accelerated format, convenience of location and availability of online options (Ausburn, 2004). Colleges and universities that choose to offer blended courses do so for many of the same reasons: flexibility, ease of dealing with large classes and the solution to often inconsistent quality of instruction, particularly in institutions relying on large adjunct populations or in a distributed system (Sharpe). The flexibility of this modality extends even to its definition, for colleges define blended learning differently in terms of the mix of its face-to-face and e-learning components. For some institutions, the face-to-face segment is a multi-day "immersion" experience where students meet once during the course, while others meet face-to-face as frequently as once a week. A shared quality among many of these definitions is the emphasis on engaged learning. Bob Albrecht (2006) notes that the best reason for adapting a blended model is the desire to change the quality of learning. Choosing to offer blended courses as a solution to capacity issues will not necessarily change the students' learning experience. Faculty and institutions, however, can redefine the learning experience with blended courses by shifting the focus from the teacher to the student, creating independent learners and establishing a community of

learners who transform their interaction with course content and with one another into palpable learning. In addition, blended learning dissolves the dichotomy between technology-enhanced learning and seat-based learning. The opportunity exists for colleges offering blended learning to develop an alternative to the Carnegie unit that would instead provide a more meaningful measure of learning based on competency acquisition. With a focus on competencies, colleges using a blended format are preparing students with the tools necessary to be participants in the 21st century knowledge economy.

Brandman University developed its iDEAL, (Instructional Design for Engaged Adult Learning) model of blended, engaged learning in response to the needs of the adult student population it serves. While many Brandman students attend courses online, many others value the in-classroom component and do not want a strictly online experience. Our decision was also driven by our recognition that as a distributed campus with sites spread from Seattle, Washington to San Diego, California, the student learning experience varied significantly. The Brandman iDEAL allows all faculty to be involved in the re-designing of the curriculum from the learning objectives forward. The Brandman iDEAL is resulting in courses that address the educational and work force needs of the students with the additional value of fomenting a campus-wide discussion, beyond individual disciplines and schools, on the topic of how best to educate adult students in the 21st century.

Brandman University developed its iDEAL, (Instructional Design for Engaged Adult Learning) model of blended, engaged learning in response to the needs of the adult student population it serves.

What is Engaged Learning?

Our adult students are living what earlier theorists predicted, and U.S. employment records now illustrate: few will hold only one position in a lifetime, and most people will not only change positions but also entire careers. As a result, learning must be considered lifelong for students who demand to see the relevance to the world in which they live and work. This living-learning reality mandates that the traditional methods of teaching change. Bele notes that the more expansive definitions of blended learning reflect the emphasis on engagement: "The original use of the phrase 'blended learning' was often associated with linking traditional classroom activities to e-learning activities. However, the term has evolved to encompass a much richer set of learning dimensions: blending online and offline learning, blending self-paced and collaborative learning, blending structured and unstructured learning, blending learning and practice" [15]. The engaged learning concept de-centers the instructor from a position of authority and master of knowledge; instead, the professor becomes a guide who structures learning communities as he/she assists students in the generative process of learning. Rovai and Jordan (2004) suggest a shift in the faculty role to designers of the learning environment, for careful coordination of the in-classroom and online portions of the courses and the design of scaffolded assignments that utilize teamwork and independent research epitomize the construction of an engaged learning setting. In such, blended courses

have the potential to facilitate a community of inquiry. Students become independent thinkers who control their learning, and in the blended model of engaged learning, critical thinking and collaborative learning are promoted. In essence, the engaged learning model refashions the best aspects of the graduate seminar, with all participants contributing to the knowledge capital.

With a focus on the construction of the learning environment over the traditional role of the dispenser of knowledge, the instructor can individualize instruction. The e-learning aspect facilitates students' redundancy learning through audio, video and textual versions of the material, allowing students the choice of how best to master the materials. Dziuban, Moskal, and Hartman (2005) suggest that without the bounds of in-class time, students can spend as much time as necessary to master the material. In addition, an increase in student engagement in blended courses also occurs as students and faculty experience a level of comfort facilitated by student-to-student and faculty-to-student interactions. When students become comfortable with the instructor and their peers, they become more involved with the course material. No doubt traditional-aged students would also benefit from this instructional modality, but it is ideally suited for the adult student who values the utilitarian features of learning and responds to the concept of shared learning: "the hybrid instructional model joins technology, architecture, and people in a 'bricks and clicks' learning structure that can be ideal for adult learners because it joins the flexibility of online learning with the collaboration, networking and sharing of life experiences that are typically valued by adults, while also providing psychological and mentoring support for those adults who may lack experience and comfort with either the academic environment or electronic technology" (Ausburn pg. 2). In an engaged blended format, faculty structure a learning environment that expands the borders traditionally set by the timing of face-to-face meetings. Students empowered by creative assignments, application of material to life experiences, and the infusion of resources supplied by all learners explode the containment of learning. Blended learning, more than wholly face-to-face or wholly online learning, dismantles crucial barriers to lifelong learning: access, learning design, and informational (Sligte and Koper, 2008).

Engaged learning is the central driving concept of Brandman's iDEAL model. An Engaged Learning Team composed of faculty and administrative members who hold degrees and experience in instructional design guided faculty as they redesigned each Brandman course, asking the fundamental questions:

- What do I want students to achieve upon the completion of the course?
- What assignments will demonstrate student competency of learning outcomes?
- How can I scaffold assignments that will encourage the demonstration of developing skills as well as promote teamwork?

Curriculum teams provided feedback, and best practices were shared beyond the narrow discipline of an individual field or School.

¹ Sligte and Koper identify five barriers to lifelong learning; in addition to the three noted above, they include mental and financial barriers (2). These barriers are self-explanatory, except for informational, which refers to a failure to market programs to those who would benefit or failure to provide adequate advising once students enroll.

Why choose an accelerated model?

Adult students prefer an accelerated format as a way to fast-track degree completion and manage time. The blended model, when combined with an accelerated schedule, allows students to continue to minimize the time spent on campus while maintaining the goal of a fast-paced learning scenario. Students review material and engage in learning throughout the week instead of completing assignments "just in time" for the class meeting. Alignment of activities and the construction of assignments culminate in a project that builds on the materials and work completed throughout the course. As research studies suggest, neither the academic rigor of accelerated courses nor breadth and depth are compromised because of time constraints in a well-designed blended course. Time is a factor in learning, but of equal importance are student capacity, instructional excellence and student motivation (Wlodkowski, 2003). Conrad found that accelerated courses were rewarding learning experiences when instructor enthusiasm, active learning, classroom interaction and a relaxed learning environment were features of the course (Wlodkowski, 2003). Preliminary research suggests that adult students in accelerated formats persist at a higher rate if they feel connected to other students (Wlodkowski, Mauldin, and Gahn, 2001). The blended model of engaged learning provides more opportunities for student-to-student relationships as students can develop a face-to-face rapport that is strengthened through the online engagement. Moreover, the construction of the blended learning environment is founded on active learning principles, thus increasing the likelihood that students studying in this modality will demonstrate persistence and learning acquisition at rates similar to published research.

The blended model of engaged learning provides more opportunities for student-to-student relationships as students can develop a face-to-face rapport that is strengthened through the online engagement.

With the roll-out of iDEAL at Brandman, all courses were redesigned from nine weeks to an eight-week period. Deleting one week per course provides six terms per year, allowing students to complete up to 36 units per year (versus 30 units previously). Summer term courses will match the model of all other terms providing consistency in delivery time and a standardized pattern to learning that students value.

What are the important considerations for blended learning design?

Research consistently points to the critical need for thoughtful planning of any blended course. In particular, the salient features of course redesign include an analysis of the course as currently taught, use of student feedback, using a team for redesign, clarity of principles for the redesign and remembering to continue to develop and improve the course over several years (Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts, and Francis, 4). Of greatest importance is the understanding of the purpose of the redesign. An approach of "making a course hybrid" differs from "designing a course for optimal learning opportunities through engagement." Too often courses migrate from an in-class modality to blended without planning the connections between

the online and in-class portions, or the redesign fails to migrate away from the traditional text-heavy courses associated with online learning. Replacing a lecture with a PowerPoint is not redesign. Using the face-to-face time for lectures or giving tests is not redesign. Too often "the learner is still subordinate to the learning, which is still institution and teacher-centered." (Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts, and Francis, 2008). Redesign means a fundamental shift in understanding about learning.

In a blended course, student learning takes place in two environments, online and face-to-face, so it imperative that time spent in each is crafted with care and the connections between the two environments be articulated clearly. Although most faculty and students understand the pacing and structures of face-to-face learning, the constant evolution of online learning requires updating to realize the increasing options on how to present materials, structure community and meaningfully interact with objects and others. Centers for teaching and learning exist on many campuses to facilitate the sharing of best practices across disciplines, to introduce new technology for teaching and to support faculty who want to improve their skills. These centers contribute to successful redesign of blended learning courses, providing critical training and support for interested faculty. Without adequate training and infrastructure support, blended courses too easily fail to realize the potential increases in learning.

Authentic course redesign results in a new learning environment. Students must know what is expected of them in each setting, face-to-face and online, and adult students will demand that the time spent in each is appropriate. Research indicates that guidance is most critical to students. Structure—reminders from the instructor about due dates, announcements, information about assignments—ranked as more important to students than content (Ausburn, 2004). According to one respondent, content can be covered in the face-to-face portion, but structure must be built in (Ausburn, 2004). Similarly, another research project noted that the top three concerns for adult students are hands-on projects, instructor engagement/feedback and user-friendly technology (Chen, 2007). Consequently, blended course redesign must focus on how to structure the class for optimal student participation and active learning. This implies the need to readjust the ways in which we create content; text-heavy courses have become "archaic" in the ever-changing world on online learning (Mossavar-Rahmani and Larson-Daugherty, 2007). Centers for teaching and learning guide faculty in building learning objects and interactions appropriate to this new environment.

Expectation guidelines for faculty and students are necessary. Research indicates that students want learning materials made accessible in the courses themselves; they found textbooks expensive and instructors inconsistent in the use of materials (Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts and Francis, 2005). With the ease of posting documents in an online course, instructors must think and plan in advance how to use the resources they provide. Document overload easily occurs and frustrates students. Suggestions for increasing student engagement in blended courses include providing notes through the online portion of the class with voice-overs or videos to supplement. Students who do not have to take notes in a face-to-face class can focus on problem-solving, team-building and discussions. Building in chat functions, discussion boards, group activities and learning

communities allows students to experience interactivity, communication and connectedness, all of which are high priorities among adult students (Ausburn, 2004). Concomitant with this is clarity on expectations. In keeping with the constructivist learning theory that guides much of adult learning design, engaged students will work in cooperative groups and focus on problem-solving; the knowledge or experience of each student will influence the joint construction of knowledge those working together form (Stewart, Bachman, and Babb, 2009). The role of the instructor is to help the students set their goals and teach themselves, but most students have little knowledge of the process, time commitment or issues involved in being successful in this enterprise. Therefore, expectations about these topics must be clear to all. Faculty must also be aware of the time commitment and role they will play. According to the research conducted by Carol Lundberg (2003), learning is most seriously impacted by the degree to which peer teaching, peer discussion and faculty interaction were included in a course.

Technology support and training for faculty and students eradicates wasted time and anxiety. Technology is a tool to support engaged learning, but it is not the driver of the learning. Research indicates that the most effective means of redesigning courses for blended learning is a faculty development center: "A designated university-wide faculty development center with a learner-centered philosophy is essential to the success of any technology-based distance education program" (Garrison 2009, pg. 11). A campus-wide center provides consistent training and support and guarantees the use of best practices in course redesign and implementation. Making sure that each course has contact information for students to receive technical support and information on policies provides the consistency so crucial to adult students.

Brandman addressed these critical issues through a variety of strategies. Thoughtful planning began with the contracting of consultants to begin introducing the pedagogical theory underlying blended learning. This step advanced to the establishment of a full-time "Engaged Learning Team" of instructional designers and migrated to developing courses through the strategic training and development of faculty (full-time and adjunct) course re-designers. A focus on how to utilize the benefits of both in-class and online components has helped faculty weave a rich educational tapestry that builds community through scaffolding of projects based on real-world considerations. Faculty learned how to design courses that encouraged learning throughout the week rather than concentrated in a "just in time" model too often deployed by students. Courses were piloted, and feedback from faculty and students improved the iDEAL model and guides other course redesign projects. Technologists assist faculty in the use of the Blackboard learning management system and encourage faculty to use technology in new ways that support student learning.

As the University prepares to offer a full schedule of blended courses in fall 2010, a thorough training plan for all who will teach is being offered at each campus. Instructional designers and technologists will travel to campuses to provide hands-on professional development in the pedagogy of engaged learning and to provide instruction on the use of technology. Staff members on each campus will also be trained to provide additional resources on an ongoing basis. Most exciting, however, is the continuous improvement plan for the blended courses based on evidence. All faculty across the system

teaching a particular course will become part of a “teaching-learning” community comprising others teaching that course. Together, they will share ideas for improvement and provide additional options for assignments, discussion prompts and learning objects. Through the shared experience each course will be improved based on experiences of all instructors of a given course—both full and part-time faculty – as equal peers, not just on academic theory. In this way, adjuncts who are key providers of the Brandman learning experience have the opportunity to actively influence curriculum design and improvement. Brandman University demonstrates to adjuncts what we say: we value you.

Opportunities for promoting the blended model of engaged learning?

Based on independent research conducted by Brandman University, using a combination of news-specific and search engine-generated research, competitor institutions were assessed for their marketing, transparency and integration of blended and engaged learning. Methods yielded a total of 54 institutions, which had either press releases or general material related to blended or engaged learning. Of these institutions, only 13 had high levels of integration, while 19 had some level of transparency; the remaining 22 institutions were neither well integrated nor transparent in their use of blended and engaged learning. Only five schools had both high integration and high transparency; however, even these five institutions did not meet the criteria for a fully adopted model of blended and engaged learning. Institutions’ Web site messaging for blended and/or engaged learning revolved around convenience, flexibility, innovation and quality. Very few schools conveyed messages about the active or engaged learning aspects of blended learning environments. While many schools have teaching and learning center Web sites to deliver information about blended learning, these sites are faculty-focused and not student- or institution-focused.

Conclusion

The Brandman iDEAL reflects the best practices of research findings on the needs of adult students in the 21st century. Students are not constrained by local choices; they will choose the educational program that best fits their needs, regardless of location. Providing an accelerated format that utilizes the convenience and resources of technology with the benefits of face-to-face instruction meets student demands for accessibility and flexibility. Brandman’s focus on engagement is a key in distinguishing its blended program from others.

Blended learning in the engaged model does more than meet the demands of today’s adult students. The University of Central Florida, one of the pioneers in blended learning in the United States, reports that students in hybrid courses have, on average, received higher grades than students taking the same course online or face-to-face. Furthermore, the dropout rates for hybrid courses at the University of Central Florida have been lower when compared to the dropout rates for other course modalities (Mossavar-Rahmani and Larson-Daugherty, 2007). Baldwin-Wallace College in Cleveland, Ohio, developed a hybrid online model that focused attention on the building of community in the first face-to-face meeting. As a result Baldwin-Wallace has a completion rate of almost 100 percent in the hybrid course (Martyn, 2003). The Pew Grant Program in Course Redesign examined 30 projects and found

improved student learning in more than half the blended work (Dziuban, Moskal, and Hartman, 2005). Research opportunities continue to abound in demonstrating students achieving competency of stated learning outcomes at the same or better level in an accelerated blended model compared to either completely online or completely face-to-face models.

This model also provides students with the workforce skills valued by employers. In the knowledge economy of the modern world, the old models of the instructor-led lecture class will not be adequate. According to research by the World Bank, the competencies most valued in our world economy are teamwork, problem-solving and motivation for lifelong learning. These skills and dispositions "cannot be acquired in a learning setting in which teachers dictate facts to learners who seek to learn them only in order to be able to repeat them" (pg. 28). The American Association of Colleges and Universities commissioned a report by Hart Associates (2010) on employers' view on student preparation for the workforce. Although employers gave higher scores for teamwork and ethical decision-making when compared to the past reports, improvements can still be had, as can improvements in self-knowledge, writing, critical thinking, adaptability, self-direction and global knowledge. The combination of self-reflection, independent work and group work required in a well-designed, blended course develops these crucial skills. Because the online component promotes reflective thinking before answering questions and requires input from everyone, students gain experience in writing, critical thinking and responsiveness to others.

Overall, the U.S. Department of Education (2009) report on blended learning found that while blended learning is more effective than fully online, which is more effective than fully face-to-face, the level of instructor involvement is crucial. As instructor involvement decreases, so too does the effectiveness and value of the blended model. Therefore, engagement must extend to the faculty, and a process of continuous improvement to the courses and professional development opportunities are key to a successful blended program. Just as students enjoy blended learning because of the enhanced emphasis on community building, so too will faculty develop more engaged courses that reflect best practices when blending is a community endeavor. "What makes blended learning particularly effective is its ability to facilitate a community of inquiry. Community provides the stabilizing, cohesive influence that balances the open communication and limitless access to information on the Internet. Communities also provide the condition for free and open dialogue, critical debate, negotiation and agreement—the hallmarks of higher education" (Garrison, pg. 3). The sentiment applies equally to faculty and students. Perhaps the best testament to the value of blended learning came from a student evaluation at Penn State. The student complained that in blended learning, he had to learn everything himself. John Morioka, Maria Marco and most adult students would make such a pronouncement with pride.

Works Cited

Albrecht, B. (2006, June). Enriching student experience through blended learning. Educause Center for applied research. (Research Bulletin). Boulder, CO: Educause Center for Applied Research 2006(12): 1-1.

Ausburn, L. (2004). Gender and learning strategy differences in non-traditional adult students' design preferences in hybrid distance courses. *Journal of interactive online learning*. 3(2): 1-17.

Bele, J. & Rugeli, J. (2007). Blended learning: an opportunity to take the best of both worlds. *IJet: International journal of emerging technologies in learning* (www.i-jet.org). 1-5.

Bersin, J. (2004). *The Blended Learning Book: Best Practices, Proven Methodologies, and Lessons Learned*. Washington D.C.: Pfeiffer.

Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (2005). *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*. Washington D.C.: Pfeiffer.

Chen, S. (2007). Instructional design strategies for intensive online courses: an objectivist-constructivist blended approach. *Journal of interactive online learning*. 6(1): 72-86.

Dziuban, C. D. (2007). *Blended Learning: Research Perspectives*. Needham, MA: Sloan-C.

Dziuban, C.D., Moskal, P. D., & Hartman, J. (2005). Higher education, blended learning, and the generations: Knowledge is power no more. In J. Bourne & J.C. Moore (Eds.), *Elements of Quality Online Education: Engaging Communities*. Needham, MA: Sloan Center for Online Education.

Garrison, D. (2009, June 17). Exploring the dynamics of a blended learning experience *International Blended Learning Conference*. Lecture conducted from University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire University.

Garrison, D. and Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education* 7 (2004) 95-105.

Hart Research Associates (2010). Raising the bar: employers' views on college learning in the wake of the economic downturn. A survey among employers conducted on behalf of: the Association of American Colleges and Universities. January 20, 2010: 1-10.

Lundberg, C. A. (2003). The Influence of Time-Limitations, Faculty, and Peer Relationships on Adult-Student Learning: A Causal Model. *Journal of Higher Education*, 74, 665-688.

Martyn, Margie (2003). The Hybrid online model: good practice. *Educause Quarterly*. November: 18-23.

Mossavar-Rahmani, F. & Larson- Daugherty, C. (2007). Supporting the hybrid learning model: a new proposition. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*. 3(1): 67-78.

Rovai, A. and Jordon, H. (2004). Blended learning and sense of community: a comparative analysis with traditional and fully online graduate courses. *International review of research in open and distance learning*. 5(2): 1-13.

Sharpe, R., Benfield, G., Roberts, G. and Francis, R. (2005). The undergraduate experience of blended e-learning: a review of UK literature and practices. *Higher education academy*. 1-103.

Sligte, H. and Koper, R. (2008). Empowering learners for lifelong competence development: pedagogical, organizational and technological issues. *IJet: International journal of emerging technologies in learning (www.i-jet.org)* 3 (special issue): 4-6.

Stewart, C, Bachman, C, & Babb, S. (2009). Replacing professor monologues with online dialogues: a constructivist approach to online course template design. *MERLOT Journal of online learning and teaching* (5.3): 511-521.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies*, Washington, D.C., 2009.

Veronikas, S, and Shaughnessy, M. (2004). Teaching and learning in a hybrid world: an interview with Carol Twigg. *Educause Review* (39.4): 50-62.

Webb, H., Gill, G., and Poe, G. (2005). Teaching with the case method online: pure versus hybrid approaches. *Decision science journal of innovative education*. 3(2): 1-28.

Wlodkowski, R. (2003). Accelerated learning in colleges and universities. *New directions for adult and continuing education*. 97: 5-15.

Wlodkowski, R., Mauldin, J., and Gahn, S. (2001). Learning in the fast lane: adult learners' persistence and success in accelerated college programs. Lumina Foundation for education: New agenda series. 4(1): 1-41.

Work Bank Report (2003). Lifelong learning in the global knowledge economy: *challenges for developing countries*. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Washington, DC.



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM