

DETERMINING THE RIGHT MIX: A DISCUSSION OF THEORY, RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE IN DESIGNING BLENDED COURSES

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Abstract

Blended learning formats, often referred to as hybrid courses, are appearing more in marketing programs, both in traditional higher education institutions as well as in professional training environments. The goal of the special session is to provide participants with a better understanding of best practices in designing blended courses so that they can 1) determine if blended learning formats fit their needs relative to the courses and students they teach and 2) walk away with practical tips and tools in implementing and improving courses which use blended learning formats.

The session begins with a very brief overview of theory and research on best practices in blended learning, with particular emphasis on the Community of Inquiry Model as a filter in effective course design. The model focuses on how teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence affect the design of effective learning environments and what factors should be considered in achieving these forms of presence in courses. Panelists provide access to overview specific resources which can assist instructors in deciding how to blend learning activities across face-to-face and online and/or out of class learning environments.

The remainder of the session focuses on panelist feedback on particularly effective and/or ineffective tools and learning activities personally used in blended learning. The goal is to illustrate how particular activities align with/undermine theoretical guidelines for best practices, and inspire broader discussion of particular technology tools and learning exercises that should be used in the implementation of blended learning formats. Specifically, each panelist addresses each of the following questions:

- Provide one example each of the best/worst learning exercise you used in a blended learning course. What was critical to making it (not) work?
- What single technology tool (a particular tool as opposed to a Learning Management System) was most important in contributing to the success of your blended learning course?
- In your opinion, what are the 1-2 learner/course/instructor traits that most influence the success of blended learning courses?

The session invites audience involvement to facilitate sharing of practical learning tools to be used in blended course formats.