Developing Online Learning in the Helping Professions
Online, Blended, and Hybrid Models

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The first “how to” manual for online teaching in the helping professions

This is the first hands-on guide to address the unique challenges of educators in the helping professions who have minimal or no experience with online technologies. Written for online instructors, clinical faculty, program directors, administrators, and other educators, it describes practical and effective ways to teach material that is intrinsically based on face-to-face interaction through mediated means.

Grounded in research and the expertise of authors with years of online teaching experience, the book moves from the basics of online course delivery to more complex arenas such as preparing both instructors and students to effectively transition to online learning. The book examines a variety of online designs uniquely suited to courses in the helping professions, including such platforms as Blackboard Collaborate, Blackboard Vista, and Moodle. Moving beyond lecture-level education, the text discusses online supervision of students who are beginning field and clinical experiences, as well as ethical considerations when teaching and supervising online. Replete with abundant tips, reflective questions, checklists, timelines, and vignettes, the text also includes an entire chapter devoted to overcoming fears of the online environment for both instructor and student.

KEY FEATURES:
• Addresses the unique needs and concerns of online teaching and training in the helping professions
• Provides examples of course content at multiple levels and practice settings
• Includes practical tips, reflective questions, checklists, course design timelines, and vignettes to support the reader at all stages of teaching online
• Defines key terms and definitions
• Considers common pitfalls to avoid
Developing Online Learning in the Helping Professions
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Prior to her life in academia, Jocelyn spent more than 15 years in the field of social work and nonprofit administration, which included middle and senior management positions. Dr. Taliaferro has been an active member on several nonprofit boards of directors in Washington, DC, Maryland, Delaware, and North Carolina as well as secretary and later chair of the Baltimore City Mayor’s Mental Health Advisory Committee. She has been teaching online and hybrid courses since 2006.

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Developing Online Learning in the Helping Professions

*Online, Blended, and Hybrid Models*

Angie C. Smith, PhD, LPCS, NCC
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Editors
“Education is one thing that cannot be taken away from you,” my wise grandfather shared with me as a child. This book is dedicated to him and his supreme love for learning. Additionally, the book would not have been possible without the love, encouragement, and support of my partner, Jeff Smith, children Hannah, Ella, and Colton, and, of course, all the students who have taught me in many ways throughout the years. Much love and gratitude.

—Angie C. Smith

Hard work and persistence are two of many attributes my parents and grandparents instilled in me. Without their guidance over the years, my efforts to co-author this text would look quite different or may simply not exist. I also must mention the love, support, and encouragement I continually receive from my partner Jenna and two sons Jameson and Jacob. They mean more to me than I can ever express. As such, this book is dedicated to them.

—Jeffrey M. Warren

To my dear wife, Elsa, for her love, tireless support, sacrifice, and creativity.

—Siu-Man R. Ting

This work is dedicated to my grandparents, who admonished me to “Be Somebody,” and to my parents, who have encouraged me at every step. A special thank you to my husband, who supports all I do, my coauthors, who were amazing to work with, and my students, who are the entire reason I continue to do this work.

—Jocelyn D. Taliaferro

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This is a sample from DEVELOPING ONLINE LEARNING IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS: ONLINE, BLENDED, AND HYBRID MODELS

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Online teaching has become more popular than ever before. Although the bulk of college instruction is provided in face-to-face environments, the use of distance or online instruction has steadily increased. Many departments in the helping professions offer at least hybrid or online courses if not entire online programs. The growth and attractiveness of online instruction are manifold. For social work administrators, there are more demands to increase enrollments to meet student demand and interest, even while simultaneously there are fewer resources available to serve these students. Further, more nontraditional students are enrolling in colleges and universities across the country. These students are often older, have caregiver responsibilities, have part- or full-time jobs, and are unable to adhere to the traditional college schedule. At NC State University, most undergraduate classes are offered on Tuesday/Thursday at 10:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. That is exactly the time that nontraditional students are unavailable.

Online and hybrid classes address many of these issues. Online classes provide the flexibility for colleges and universities to offer more sections of classes to more students, thereby stretching resources and meeting the needs of students. However, while this may solve some administrative issues, teaching online can be challenging for instructors. Teaching online can be quite labor intensive and frustrating for instructors who may not be fully prepared for the undertaking. Instructors must be able to translate seated class content to the online environment, have strategies to balance the workload, be familiar with technology, and understand how to engage students online. Hence, this book is an essential tool for online instructors.

All too often instructors are assigned an online class with little direction or instruction on how to teach online. This book serves as a companion for instructors regardless of their experience with online teaching: whether they are planning to teach, are first-semester online instructors, or have taught online for many years. This book is designed to help develop a roadmap for the next online class. For instructors who are new to the idea of online instruction, the authors include a chapter that reviews the terminology of the online teaching environment. However, the book also has information about the research
on online teaching for those who are more interested in the basis of online instruction rather than the nuts and bolts of implementation.

Information about online teaching is shared in a way that is easily “digest-ible.” An instructor does not have to read the entire book from cover to cover to begin to implement the strategies described. It includes concrete samples and lessons to incorporate, as well as adapt, to fit the online instructor’s style, and course offerings are shared by experts in the field. This book is written in a conversational and nonjudgmental tone. The authors do not profess to have all the answers, but instead share their wisdom and guidance freely. Their approach does not preach, lecture, or scold. They even share their own mishaps and bloopers. The tone of the book makes the information easy to consume and relatable.

Another notable feature of the book is the opportunity for reflection and implementation that is offered in each chapter. As a resource for instructors in the helping profession, it provides the chance for readers to assess their own ideas and experiences about teaching while offering additional avenues to explore and enhance their own teaching practices. There are practical, actionable suggestions throughout the book, including methods of keeping students engaged and setting boundaries for the classroom, students, and the instructor. This is one of the most valuable aspects of the book, in that it is truly a guide and not simply a theoretical reflection on online teaching. Instructors can immediately implement the teaching tips and best practices that are offered throughout this book.

Also especially relevant to instructors teaching online in the helping professions is information about ethical standards and best practices. Rightly so, instructors in the helping professions are sensitive to issues of ethics that are associated with online teaching and learning. Some of these issues are highlighted in a practical way using case studies and real-life examples. Just as social work, counselor education, psychology, and other helping professions have codes of ethics, so this book includes a discussion of the ethical considerations for teaching online while providing thoughtful ways of addressing these concerns and relating them to the various professional ethics codes.

Although no book is the single panacea for learning to teach online, this volume is filled with resources, examples, and strategies for teaching online in the helping professions. The book is a guide that will help instructors have a rewarding, stimulating, and satisfying experience with online instruction.

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Preface

All four of the authors of this book are professionals in the helping professions. When we started teaching online higher education courses in the helping professions, it felt like we were tossed into the deep end and expected to swim . . . or sink. Assistance, support, instruction, and colleagues with experience in the world of online education hardly existed, so we had to figure it out for ourselves. And we did. But it was challenging, sometimes painful, and always painstaking.

Now we have years of instruction under our belts, and we want to help our colleagues in helping vocations—our fellow gatekeepers for our professions—more efficiently, effectively, and quickly learn the subtle (and not so subtle) ins outs of online education in our field. A quick Google search will reveal that there are several books in circulation about teaching online, but few focus on the specific challenges and dilemmas that face instructors who teach online courses in psychology, counseling, social work, and other helping vocations where relationships, connection, trust, privacy, and confidentiality are the cornerstones of the field.

In the helping professions, we meet clients where they are in their journeys. Similarly, this book strives to meet you, the reader, right “where you are at” in your quest to learn how to teach in the online environment. Whether your comfort with technology is basic, intermediate, or advanced, you are welcome! Come to this book no matter where you are on your path, because there is always something new to be learned. We even learned a few new ideas from each other in the process of writing the book. We all are continuous learners!

Given the growing prevalence of online learning in the helping professions, we wanted to provide an easy-to-read, research- and experience-based “how to” guide for online instruction. We adopted a multidisciplinary approach, elaborating on the ideas, practices, teaching and learning strategies, new technologies, best practices, and ethical issues for administrators and instructors as well as students, as student-centered education is a vital component of helping professional education.

We invite you to participate and reflect on each topic, and we offer vignettes, reflective questions, checklists, examples, bullet points, timelines, tips, and
takeaways to support your growth and development as an instructor and the
development of your online courses and programs.

Chapters 1 and 2 set the foundation for your new endeavor and familiarize
new online instructors with the fundamental technology and practical appli-
cations of delivering content online within the helping fields. This includes a
review of basic education platforms and a glossary of key terms and definitions.
These are the words, jargon, and terminology that you will need to know as
you begin to learn about online education.

In Chapter 3, we address the typical fears and anxieties associated with
teaching online in the helping vocations, including unfamiliarity with tech-
nology, and we offer approaches that can smooth ruffled emotions so that you
can stress less and confidently deliver your online course.

In Chapter 4, the authors focus on the student experience and perspectives
of online courses based on a brief guided questionnaire of open-ended questions
offered to our learners. What is the most important factor for online student
success and satisfaction? Find out!

What does current social science research and helping professions literature
have to say about the efficacy of online education and delivery methods? In
Chapter 5, the authors survey the research into online education and address
the quality concerns associated with online classes and programs, demonstrat-
ing their effectiveness.

We move from theory to the super practical in Chapter 6, where we present
a roadmap of practical steps for course design and building, tech-tool use,
communication techniques, and many more considerations for a successful
semester. We guide the new online instructor (and administrator) through
da detailed list of steps to take for building online courses and a timeline for
successful course design, planning, development, and implementation. What
do you need to know and what do you need to do to get your course up and
running in one month or less? We show you how.

In Chapter 7, the authors address practical tips to learners themselves, and
provide useful samples for instructors to use in preparing them to become
online learners; we also include tips that were developed by graduate students
in online education programs. These samples are effective tools for novice
students and others who are new to the online learning environment.

In Chapter 8, we provide tips and best practices from experts in the helping
field; the professional literature offers a wide range of research studies that
can inform online programs (administrators, instructors, and staff) about
best practices. We know that developing a new online course or program can
be overwhelming for new online instructors, requiring instructors to learn to
use related technologies, design a curriculum, develop learning modules of
the right size, plan for learning activities, and design tests and examinations.

In Chapter 9, we join with additional contributors who also teach online
courses within the helping professions to share samples, templates, ethical
considerations, standards of practice, and examples from both Blackboard
Collaborate (synchronous) meetings and asynchronous platforms. These
examples are aligned with the core standards within the helping professions.
This chapter provides the reader with “ready-made” activities, examples, and
resources that can be used, adapted, and repurposed when developing and delivering a course.

In Chapter 10, entitled “What NOT to Do,” we walk you through some common pitfalls—along with the pits we fell in—and present recommendations on what not to do based on our experiences and those of other online instructors in the helping professions.

Ethics and academic integrity are the central subjects of Chapter 11. We focus on the ethical considerations in online teaching alongside the distinctiveness and importance of integrity in our field, recognizing that privacy, confidentiality, and trust are the foundation of our work. The chapter highlights ethical standards, clinical work, variations on teaching online, student ethics, and practical case studies and vignettes.

Education- and communication-centered technology are changing rapidly, so it is vital for online instructors to continue to update their knowledge and skills in those technologies. In Chapter 12, we look at the evolving technological environment around online learning. Colleagues at the Distance Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTa) department at North Carolina State University, who are experts in instructional design and technology within the college setting, share concrete examples and describe the discussions they engage in when working with both new and seasoned instructors who are delivering content online.

The authors then look ahead at trends and opportunities in online teaching and learning in Chapter 13, presenting several practical tools, software, apps, and platforms for the reader to consider using to enhance the online class experience.

Finally, in Chapter 14, the authors provide encouragement to readers who are beginning the process of course design and delivery. In this final chapter, we include a To Do list for preparing your online course and semester.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to all who contributed to the creation of the book. A publication is not created in a vacuum and it takes the hard work and dedication of so many individuals to collectively make it happen. We are eternally grateful for the support of colleagues, our institutions, friends, and family. We would like to thank the following colleagues and departments for their continuous support and encouragement: MaryAnn Danowitz, Ellen Vasu, Penny Pasque, Stacy Gant, and Lacey Bloom, as well as the Distance Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA), Educational Leadership, Policy, and Human Development (ELPHD) at North Carolina State University and Alfred Bryant, Angela McDonald, and the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank our students for sharing their time, energy, and feedback with all of us so that we can continue to learn and grow as online instructors and helping professionals. We are grateful for all the unique contributions you bring to the profession and classroom!
Share

Developing Online Learning in the Helping Professions: Online, Blended, and Hybrid Models
CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Online Teaching in the Helping Professions: Where Do You Fit In?

OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

1. What are your goals for online teaching?
2. What are you looking for in this book that will support your online teaching goals?
3. Have you taught an online class or taken an online class before?
4. Where are your gaps in knowledge?
5. What resources do you need to effectively teach your course?
6. Who do you know in the field who teaches online courses?
7. What resources are available in and around your institution that can support your online teaching practice?

So, you want to teach an online course or in an online program . . .

Okay, maybe you are reluctant, but you have been charged with developing an online program or teaching a course online. Now you are looking for help and direction on how and where to start this journey. It’s okay if you are feeling a little overwhelmed or stumped on where to start—we have been there and we are here to help.

Our hope for you, as you read this book, is that you will examine who you are as a person and instructor. As you do so, begin to consider your identity as an online instructor within the helping professions. What do you already bring to the course? How will you share your gifts, knowledge, and expertise in the online space?

We, the authors, have been teaching online courses for a collective 23 years. Through the years and through all the courses we’ve taught, we have made tons of errors and mistakes, discovered what works and what doesn’t, grappled with personal challenges, took blind leaps of faith into innovative technology, developed new ways of being and relating online, and learned to embrace online
modes of instruction and modeling to our students. From our experiences, we have “gathered our thoughts” for online teaching success with good outcomes for our students.

Let us take you by the hand and walk this journey with you. We will share our experiences and help you think through course design, requisite technology, and helpful resources to smooth your transition. We also offer tips, tricks, activities, exercises, and personal points of reflection to get you started.

Buckle up and enjoy the ride as we navigate teaching and learning online.

### Why Online Education?

Online learning is a hot topic. It is one of the fastest growing trends in the educational use of technology:

- The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 12,153,000 online students are enrolled in postsecondary, credit-granting courses (Parsad, Lewis, & Tice, 2008).
- Technology-based distance learning in K–12 public schools grew by about 65% between 2002 and 2005, and in 2007 more than 1 million K–12 students took online courses (Picciano & Seaman, 2007).
- In the fall of 2010, more than 6.1 million students were taking at least one online course (Bart, 2011).
- 31% of all higher education students now take at least one course online (Allen & Seaman, 2011).

Currently, online education programs are typically asynchronous; the technology used for these courses includes emails, discussion forums, article reviews, and narrated slides or film clips (Brown, 2002, p. 9; Vogel & Klassen, 2001, pp. 104–114; Yang & Cornelious, 2004). However, recent improvement in synchronous teaching technology means that more interactive discussions, assignments, and exercises can be built into the course design. For example, some courses use web conferencing or virtual meetings via Blackboard Collaborate, Adobe Connect, and other synchronous platforms (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Walker, 2009, pp. 175–193; Smith et al., 2015, pp. 47–57; Ting, 2016).

The recent explosion of online classes and programs in higher education in the United States is attributed to shortages in classroom space and facilities due to rapid growth in the student population. Developing new online programs is far more cost-effective than constructing new buildings. Also, the growing numbers of nontraditional students, including working adults, often find it challenging to commute to campus to attend face-to-face classes. Some students live in a remote area or far from campus, or they may have family, work, or other commitments that prevent them from taking on-campus classes. For these students, online programs enable them to take classes wherever they are and usually without time limitations—although virtual class meetings for students in faraway time zones may make attendance a challenge.
Online education and technology make new demands on instructors, of course, but they also put unique demands on students. Students enrolled in online classes can study at their own pace by following a weekly study schedule or following topical learning modules, and they usually only need a desktop or laptop computer with Internet access to take the course.

Online education is a better match for some personalities and learning types than for others. It works especially well for students who are self-disciplined, independent learners who are flexible, open to using technology, willing to take initiative, and able to work in groups (Schwitzer, Ancis, & Brown, 2001).

Online Education in the Helping Professions

The growing popularity of online learning extends to the helping professions. In the United States, there are 34 online master’s programs in counselor education are listed on the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) website. In social work education, there are at least 15 baccalaureate-level programs and 63 master’s programs that are fully or mostly online, according to the Council on Social Work Education.

The benefits of moving courses into the virtual world in the helping professions are similar to those in other programs: flexibility of scheduling, ability to reach students in distant locations, fewer demands on physical classroom space on campus, and self-paced student learning that focuses on areas that the student finds especially interesting (El Mansour & Mupinga, 2007, pp. 242–248). However, there is interesting research suggesting that online forums may be especially helpful in our field. One study offered that today’s technological natives are really comfortable in digital-land, and that students are willing to disclose more when they are not in a physical classroom of peers (Trepal, Haberstroh, Duffey, & Evans, 2007, pp. 226–279). The anonymity of virtual meetings has the social function of a mask at a carnival, offering “certain kinds of relief from [those] massive pressures that societies place on individuals” (Oravec, 1996, p. 153).

Our hope is that this book will be a companion manual for you to read and reread as you learn and experiment with your online courses and programs. The nature of the book invites you into the process by reflecting on your own experiences as an individual, instructor, and helping professional. You will notice throughout the book that we have included guided questions and reflective prompts to help you to consider how you might use the information the authors share with you.

Let’s get started . . .

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1 This matches well with findings from another similar study:

Guided Prompts

1. Why did you select this book to read?

2. What do you hope to learn by reading the content of the book?

3. Where do you feel like you are beginning as an online instructor?

4. As a helping professional, what are you most curious about learning in the online environment?

5. What do you already know about teaching in the online, hybrid, and/or blended models?

HELPFUL TIP: You might have noticed that online learning is called by a variety of names. Terms such as online learning, e-learning, distance learning, e-courses, distance education, and online instruction all refer to the process of teaching via an online teaching platform.


Resources


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