TEACHING MATTERS
newsletter

In this issue:

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Editors' note: This issue combines change and continuity: making changes to what we already have, without completely overturning the old order. We present the submissions received to the "Change One Thing Challenge" (explained below), and an article by Jeff Clements (Biology, UNBSJ) discussing using something that students are using anyway (Facebook) to augment teaching, instead of other possible learning platforms. This issue also marks one change in the editorial team: Ken Craft carries on and is joined by Lucy Wilson as co-editor.

Change One Thing Challenge 2014

What it's all about

Anyone who cares about their students is constantly pondering how to help them learn more deeply and/or how to help them be more motivated to learn. Sometimes we dive in and do a complete restructuring of a course (e.g. turning a lecture course into a problem-based learning course, or flipping the class) but more often we come up with smaller changes and our courses improve as a result of an accumulation of small, inspired changes.

We often hear about the big changes but seldom about the little things, even though these can make a big difference and are easier to implement. The Change One Thing Challenge challenges you to think about what changes you have made recently to increase learning in your courses or to improve students' attitudes toward learning in your courses. We invited instructors at UNBF and UNBSJ to let us know about one thing that they changed.

What the winners received

$700 to pay for part of the cost of attending a Teaching & Learning conference or workshop. Four prizes were awarded, and recipients presented their winning entries at Kaleidoscope at UNB Fredericton in December 2014.

Thanks to all who entered. And special thanks to the donors of the Bi-Campus Trust Fund, who have generously donated money to promote and improve teaching at UNB. Change One Thing prize money is drawn from this fund.

Watch for Change One Thing 2015, coming to you next fall.

Paper, Get Your Paper...

Lisa Best, Psychology, UNBSJ

PSYC4053, History of Psychology, is required for psychology and biopsychology majors. Students often have a difficult time understanding how the history of psychology is relevant to their major. In the course, I explain how psychological theories do not develop in a vacuum but rather in response to other intellectual, social, and cultural events. I recently incorporated the Newspaper Assignment to illustrate how the development of psychology is inherently linked with other events that occurred during a specific year. Each team selects a year (from 1000 BCE to the present) and the goal of the assignment is for teams to produce a "newspaper" that reviews the year. Each team member writes a major story and although some items are related to psychology, others are only indirectly related. Creativity is graded and newspapers often include news features relating to events in psychology, book reviews, advertisements, obituaries, etc. The overall goal of the assignment is to help students understand the connections between their discipline and major events that occur simultaneously.

Resolving to argue

Dr. Rajeev Venugopal, Political Science, UNBF

In 2014, I added rounds of "Parliamentary-style debate" to Political Science classes that I teach. In this class exercise, two teams of two students face off in a structured debate over a resolution that all students develop beforehand. This exercise is rooted in Socratic pedagogy, and is designed to get students thinking about question formulation and problem definition, in addition to contemplating solutions. The exercise has proven popular, and students have debated topics such as legalization of prostitution, patronage in public service hiring, and whether front-line public servants should be allowed to display tattoos and piercings. I have noticed that this new exercise (i.e., framing questions and then actively debating both sides of the question) "forces" students to draw on underlying principles, theories and concepts in the course and apply them in a dynamic fashion, while at the same time having fun. I have also noticed that after this debate component was added to classes, students turn in better, more argumentative term papers.

Peer practice

Roxanne Reeves, Renaissance College, UNBF

In the course RCLP 1062 (online): Citizenship and Community Issues, students had to propose a solution to a problem – a problem of significance and of interest to the student. Throughout this course, students were guided to make connections between local community, national or world events, and lived experiences. To solve problems and improve society, citizens must be more than honest, responsible and law-abiding members of the community: they must also participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at the local, provincial, or national levels. Correspondingly, students were to prepare a ten page proposal or Memorandum to the Executive Council (MEC) with the intent to submit the document to some level of government or to an organization. The proposal would be peer reviewed before final submission for grading.

The initial result was online "flaming." The students hated the idea of peer review – really hated it. I let them have time to "get it all out" on the D2L Discussion Thread. I then acknowledged their unspoken fears, "pulled back the curtain" on teaching a bit by revealing

the pedagogical reasons behind the teaching choices being made, directed them to the resources created to support them in their peer review effort. Most importantly, I shared with my class some personal insight into one of the main reasons we were undertaking this exercise.

"As an academic I know that my written work is not ready for submission until it has been reviewed. External review is needed even for good writers because we have a hard time seeing our own writing errors. Plus, we need that extra feedback to sharpen our ideas, discover new directions to take, and generally elevate our work to publication quality. Yet, you as students are expected to submit your work prior to any outside review as if it were the "final draft." Then you're graded on that un-reviewed work, even though academics would never want a journal editor to make a decision on our work based on early drafts. I think it's important to apply this same principle of peer review with my students. Not only does peer review improve the quality of your work, but it improves your writing ability. Even more importantly, it gets you into the practice of asking others to review your writing, which you will need to do in the workplace, serving on civic committees, and when you find yourself involved in other collaborative endeavors. This is an academic service you are providing to your fellow student colleague. Most importantly, however, this is an investment you are making in "you." The time you allocate to this undertaking is up to you."

The exit survey I administered at the close of class indicated that this and the other peer-review exercises were a success. Each student's work product improved by at least a letter-grade. Most important to me were the students' new editing skills, their emerging confidence with the peer-review process, and the relationships they reported building with fellow-students as a consequence of such activities.

Unsolicited student response. SOURCE: Discussion Forum, RCLP 1062 on D2L

Re: Online Community
"I learned a lot in this course. It's strange, but I seem to know my online fellow classmates and educator better than ones I've shared physical classes with."

Matilda and Igor

Boon Kek, Univ 1003 Instructor, UNBSJ

This year for the Univ 1003 class, I introduced two imaginary students – Matilda and Igor, complete with demographic background and basic course enrolment numbers. I introduced the two new students so that they would be a constant for the class throughout the semester. Matilda and Igor were used as case studies, examples for class discussion as well as during simple problem solving scenarios in the topics which we were covering. In most classes, there is a group of students who prefer to communicate/learn in a kinesthetic way. In addition, there is a fear that students may become apathetic in class if the course was conducted strictly in a lecture format.

Taking a page from case based learning, the idea was that by using Matilda and Igor as cases for the class, students could use them for problem solving and application of principles learnt in class. It would help students to relate better to the subject matter. Having them as constant characters would add to the stability in the cases.

With this change, my goals for the class were (1) to engage the students with the subject matter and to facilitate group discussion and (2) to allow the students to learn to apply the principles of the course.

If there is an opportunity to try this out again, I would like to apply it more often along with improving the cases for the students.

Cast on the Big Screen

Bryan Crawford, Biology, UNBF (**Winner**)

I have begun using Doceri to ScreenCast my lectures in Cell Biology. This allows me to use my iPad to wirelessly run a Keynote presentation from my laptop and move freely around the room, while the audio and projected image data are recorded. Furthermore, this allows me to write/draw on top of whatever is being projected on the screen, or drop down a whiteboard for 'chalk-talk' style elaborations on specific topics. Finally, I can pass the iPad to students and ask them to draw/graph/illustrate some specific idea, allowing me a new form of student interaction.

Lectures are boring and even the best instructors lose members of their audience from time to time. Providing recordings of presentations is an easy way to provide both an opportunity catch details that students may have missed, and more importantly to focus on engaging in discussion during classes rather than frantically taking notes. Screencasting my lectures provides me with another way to interact with the material I am presenting in class, to get the students interacting with the material in class, and to record everything for later consideration and reflection by both myself and my students.

As the semester is not over, it's too early to draw conclusions. Furthermore, as this is a new course, it will not be possible to do a before/after comparison. However, from a self-assessment perspective, I have identified aspects of my instruction that should change, as well as aspects that have worked well. Individuals who have been unable to attend have obviously benefited, and at least anecdotally, students love it; when I am slow to upload a screencast to the D2L page I get agitated emails from students asking "where is the screencast?!?", and several have told me that this is the best learning resource they've ever had in a course. I certainly plan to continue screen casting my lectures in the future. This is a technique that is easy, cheap and effective.

Party Physics

Li-Hong Xu, Physics, UNBSJ (**Winner**)

I have been teaching 1st year Introductory Physics to a broad audience for some years. I have observed various challenges and have been constantly thinking about ways to overcome these challenges. The majority of the students are in the course because of their program requirements, and this is likely to be their only time taking Physics at the University. How do we then ensure that they learn the required material for their future professional programs even though their interest in Physics may be minimal, and how do we maximize their Physics time to make a lifelong learning impression about Physics?

One change I have made this year is to make every one of my lectures into a party: "Physics that makes you laugh then makes you think." Every lecture we spend about 5 minutes demonstrating or showing a game, a magic trick, a song, a reading, a youtube clip: anything Physics-related which students can use to entertain their friends at a party and then explain to their friends the Physics behind it. These are not entirely done by myself. I started, and I then asked for student volunteers, so that we have gradually been flipping the classroom and gotten students engaged.

Did this change make any impact on students' learning and interest in Physics? YES! By the mid-way mark of the term, I had, on several occasions, run into my students' parents and been told that "oh yes, my daughter or son is showing Physics tricks at home." Also, by the middle of the term I did not have to look for student volunteers to participate, and I was receiving more WHY questions. Students are observing and thinking, the best outcome I could hope for!

Right on time!

Jamie Miles, Chemical Engineering, UNBF (**Winner**)

I recently taught a third-year Chemical Engineering core course in Heat Transfer for the first time. When I was developing the course, I decided to implement a "just-in-time teaching" approach, which is new to me: at the start of each class, I present a practical problem that the students don't know how to solve. Through a combination of lecture material and guided problem solving, the students are capable of reaching a solution by the end of the class.

I was inspired to try the "just-in-time teaching" approach after a presentation I attended last spring at the Canadian Engineering Education Association's annual conference. There, the speaker described his use of this approach for a second-year Thermodynamics course; he restructured his course as part of a research study conducted by an MEd student and observed an improvement in student engagement and performance. Since I was starting with a clean slate in developing CHE3304, I decided to structure my lectures to connect course content with real-world problem solving in a more direct way.

The students I have spoken to are very pleased with this new approach. They find it intriguing that up front I present a question that they are unable to solve. As I work through the lecture material (developing theory and equations), I can see the gears start turning as the students begin to see how these equations can be directly applied to the problem at hand. When we work through the example as a class, the students appreciate being coached to learn valuable problem solving skills, which are applicable for this course and beyond.

Currieing Change

Ryan Hamilton, Psychology, UNBF

PSYC 3315, Applications of Cognitive Behavioural Techniques, covers a variety of behaviour change techniques that are applied by psychologists. I typically discuss interesting applications of the various techniques and expose students to the potential to make meaningful change via class demonstrations, and in class participation exercises. This year however, I involved ALL class members in a community intervention project where we tracked stair-climbing behaviour at the Currie Center to establish a baseline measurement, and then implemented an intervention to increase this behaviour. Students were responsible for all aspects of this project including data collection and entry, intervention design and implementation, and data analysis and results presentation. We took the classroom into the broader community to enhance learning and focus on knowledge mobilization.

My goal whenever I teach is to have students engage with content outside of the classroom environment. I mentioned implementing a project like this and the class was keen to take it on. This year my course enrollment was a bit lower than it is traditionally; this prompted me to take the opportunity to do something special or different that I cannot usually take on with a larger class size. While implementing this change was a lot of additional administrative work for me, I am so happy to have taken it on so as to empower the students to realize the things they have been learning, and see how much more there is to learn about behavioural change techniques.

Upon the completion of the project I was impressed by how engaged the students were. They were proud to share their observations after each class and eagerly anticipated the final results. I put a large portion of a class aside to discuss the work that they had done, share the results, and debrief the experience. While some gains were made in the use of the stairs at the Currie Center, more importantly, I could see how empowered some students were by the potential to change health-related behaviours. While this information is typically given and encouraged, this change to course delivery made it very real and very powerful.

That's a wrap!

Fatima Loutfi, Humanities & Languages, UNBSJ (**Winner**)

I decided to introduce the exam wrapper in my French Introductory courses during the fall of 2014, after coming across an article that promoted this practice. As an educator, I am always looking for ways to engage students and empower them in their learning strategies. In my courses, I directly recommend and describe certain learning approaches, and explain why they work so well. The exam wrapper helps me indirectly, by letting students discover their personal learning strategies through producing their own evaluative feedback. It also provides an opportunity for me to listen to students' concerns and to refocus, if necessary.

I used information from Marsha C. Lovett, "Using reflection and metacognition to improve student learning", and David Thompson "Exam wrapper for Intermediate Spanish" to create my exam wrapper. The "exam wrapper" or "Post-Test Self-Evaluation" is a short activity that requires a minimum of classroom time. It's repeatable, since the questions on the form can be adjusted and tailored to any particular exam, test or assignment.

The first time I introduce the exam wrapper to my class, I explain the purpose of this exercise. I ask my students to answer the questions honestly, with the purpose of allowing them to discover the most effective way of preparing for subsequent exams. I assure them that their answers won't have any impact on their grades.

Before I return the students' marked tests and before they see their actual grades, I ask them to complete the first set of questions. This approach challenges students to think about and document their study approach and the choices they made. By asking in this way, they and I can find out, for instance, how much time they devoted to a topic, whether they tried to memorize sections, or whether they understood the material.

I then hand out the tests and give them approximately 7 to 10 minutes to complete the other sections of the questionnaire, which include further questions and an opportunity to offer their own feedback or comments. Specifically, students reflect on their approach to preparing for the test, and they are asked to analyze their mistakes, by considering what kind of mistakes they made on the test. This helps them to focus on the details of the test itself and not just the grades. The third set of questions asks them to plan what they will do differently to prepare for the next test. This links their answers from parts one and two with what they plan to do in the future to improve or maintain their performance. The last question gives students the opportunity to provide their feedback or suggestions to the instructor, by telling me what I can do to help them.

I collect the forms, review the comments and note common learning behavior. I make copies of the forms and write the actual test score on each copy, for future reference. I usually return the forms to the students a week to 10 days prior to the next test. Sometimes, I add comments, suggestions, or words of encouragement. Recently, I have started printing the form on coloured paper, so that it does not get lost among their other materials.

The exam wrappers have been very beneficial to me in two respects. First of all, they make my post-exam review more effective, by allowing student participation in the process. Previously, I would review the common errors and talk about class performance. Also, prior to each test I would suggest how to prepare and the approach they should use to master the content that might cause particular challenges. Now, between the quizzes, pre-tests and the exam wrappers, I find that most students can self-regulate and self-correct, particularly after their second or third test. I am also better able to help students at risk, by spending one-on-one time to review their studying habits, help them develop new studying strategies, and remind them of the other resources available to them on campus.

Students' comments on the last part of the form, as well as knowledge of their studying habits, have helped me adjust my teaching approach or instructional design and medium of delivery. I am planning to implement exam wrappers in all my courses next year. They teach students self-reflection and improve their skills of self-assessment, encouraging them to make changes to their study habits and strategies accordingly.

FR 1204-1B Test 3- Post-test reflection Name: _____

This activity is designed to help you reflect on your test performance and, more importantly, on the effectiveness of your test preparation. Please answer the questions honestly. Your responses will be collected to improve teaching and learning in this course. They will have no impact on your grade.

1. Approximately how much time did you spend preparing for this test? _____

2. After taking the test, what grade did you expect to earn, approximately? _____ %

3. Do you think you prepared well enough for this test? _____ Yes _____ No

4. What percentage of your test-preparation time was spent in each of these activities?

a. **Reading the grammar of ch. 8 for the first time. _____ %**
b. **Re-reading "Langue et culture" and learning the vocabulary. _____ %**
c. **Reviewing workbook activities & the audio of the chapter on D2L. _____ %**
d. **Reviewing your own notes. _____ %**
e. **Reviewing previous lessons to understand the lesson concept. _____ %**
f. **Studying with a classmate, or tutor. _____ %**
g. **Did you seek the instructor help on concepts you did not understand? _____Yes _____No**
h. **Out of the six classes from the last test until this test, how many classes did you miss? _____**
i. **Mention any additional studies you did to prepare for this test.**

_____

5. After you have looked over your graded test, estimate the percentage of points you lost due to each of the following (percentages should add up to 100%).

a. **From careless mistakes _____ %**
b. **From not knowing appropriate vocabulary _____ %**
c. **From not knowing correct verb conjugations _____ %**
d. **From not understanding concepts _____ %**
e. **From not being able to apply concepts in new situations _____ %**
f. **From other reasons (Please specify below) _____ %**

_____

6. Based on your responses to the questions above, describe at least three (3) things that you plan to do differently in preparing for the next test. For instance, will you spend more time studying, change a specific study habit or try a new one? Some other strategy? Please be specific in your descriptions.

1)

2)

3)

7. What can the instructor do to support your learning and your preparation for the next test?

Based on Dr. David Thompson's exam wrapper.

Building Community

Cindy Brown, Faculty of Arts, UNBF

I have been working to improve my teaching since I entered the classroom. I have been teaching ARTS 1000 since 2004 and I was also involved in a new course called ARTS 1100. This course gives me an extra hour/week to be with my students. In that extra hour we are working on skills development (using the text) to help with the transition between high school and university (although I have some students who are more senior than that and they are really finding the class helpful). One thing that I really notice is that student engagement has really improved in Arts 1100. However, I want to keep trying to improve engagement.

This year, I had the students in both my courses take two minutes at the beginning of each class during the month of September to walk up and introduce themselves to someone else and talk for two minutes. It was wildly successful and what I noticed (because ARTS 1000/1100 is supposed to be all about discussion) is that they feel more comfortable now that they know their colleagues a little better and we have created more of a sense of community. And it gives them more of a voice. I really think student voice is the fundamental thing in keeping students engaged.

Since first term when I had students spend time interacting and engaging with one another at the beginning of each class, I have noticed that their willingness to participate in class is better than I have seen in past years. We have definitely had some interesting and engaging conversations – both serious and funny. For next year, I will continue this practice throughout the term (and not limit it to just September-October). Building community and connections between students, among their peers and with their instructors, should continue as they grow, evolve, and learn throughout their academic career.

Word-a-day

Zsuzsanna Szabo-Nyarady, Culture & Language Studies, UNBF

In order to learn a new language it is recommended that students do some practicing and reviewing every day. For the past few years I have been suggesting to the students in my Introductory Russian Language Class (RUSS 1013) that they visit the "Russian for Everyone" website to supplement the work that we do in the classroom. The best and most ambitious students did and found it very useful. The less ambitious students visited a few times or not at all. I was looking for ways to inspire more of them to study the material that we cover in class and to learn more vocabulary, so I introduced a new challenge: I ask the students to learn a new word every day by visiting the "Russian for Everyone" website and learning the "Word of the Day". (This site, which complements the textbook that I am currently using, was developed by Julia Rochtchina, a Russian language professor at the University of Victoria.) Every day on this website there is a new word accompanied by a picture and the audio with good, correct pronunciation. The students can collect bonus points that can improve their grade by learning these words. I often assign the grammar review lessons and word games that are on this website as well. I suggest to the students that when they visit "Russian for Everyone" to get their "Word of the Day", they spend some extra time there, to review grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

The results are very good. More students visit the website to learn the "Word of the Day". Once they are there more of them end up reviewing the grammar lessons and word games as well. The bonus points toward their final grades are always good for motivation. Their vocabulary and pronunciation is better than in previous years. This learning challenge helps my students with building their Russian vocabulary and increases their ability to communicate in Russian. I am really glad that I came up with this idea and I will continue using this in my introductory language classes.

Would You Like a Prezi?

Shauna Figler, Faculty of Nursing, UNBSJ

As a new faculty member with 61 students enrolled in Nursing 1011, I thought I would try to change the course to reflect some of my personal teaching methods without compromising the course objectives and outcomes. This year, instead of a poster presentation, groups were given an assignment to present to the rest of the class on a nursing theorist, using any method they chose as long as the required information was presented. For example students, were told they could use Prezi, Power point, sing, dance etc. Students ended up videoing skits, using Prezis, Power points, Drawings and Go Animate.

I decided to look at adding different ways of teaching and learning into my course design after reading research on the 7 ways in which people learn. I felt other assignments in the course would evaluate the reading, writing and lecture-type learners. Additionally, the topic of nursing theory and history can be viewed as uninteresting and I wanted to engage students. As well, after attending the new faculty orientation day and listening to the topic on group work I thought this would be a unique non-threatening way to utilize groups.

Feedback from students has been very positive with only 2 out of 61 reporting that members within their groups did not work as hard as others. Students expressed appreciation at being involved in the evaluation process of their peers as well. The assignment was assigned a value of fifteen percent with ten percent being assigned by the instructor and five percent being assigned by other group members. Each group member provided, in confidence, a rating out of five for each other group member. These values were averaged to give the student a value out of five.

Upcoming Teaching & Learning conferences and workshops

Diploma in University Teaching

April 23-May 1 at UNBSJ. Contact msmith@unb.ca for details.

Effective Teaching Institute

April 27, 2015 in Fredericton. http://www.unbtls.ca/events/#CETL

Dalhousie University Conference on Undergraduate Teaching & Learning

April 29 & 30, 2015 in Halifax. http://www.dal.ca/dept/clt/events-news/DCUTL.html

Ethical Behaviour as Leadership in Education

May 13, 2015 in Saint John 9:30-noon. http://www.unbtls.ca/events/#UNBSJ

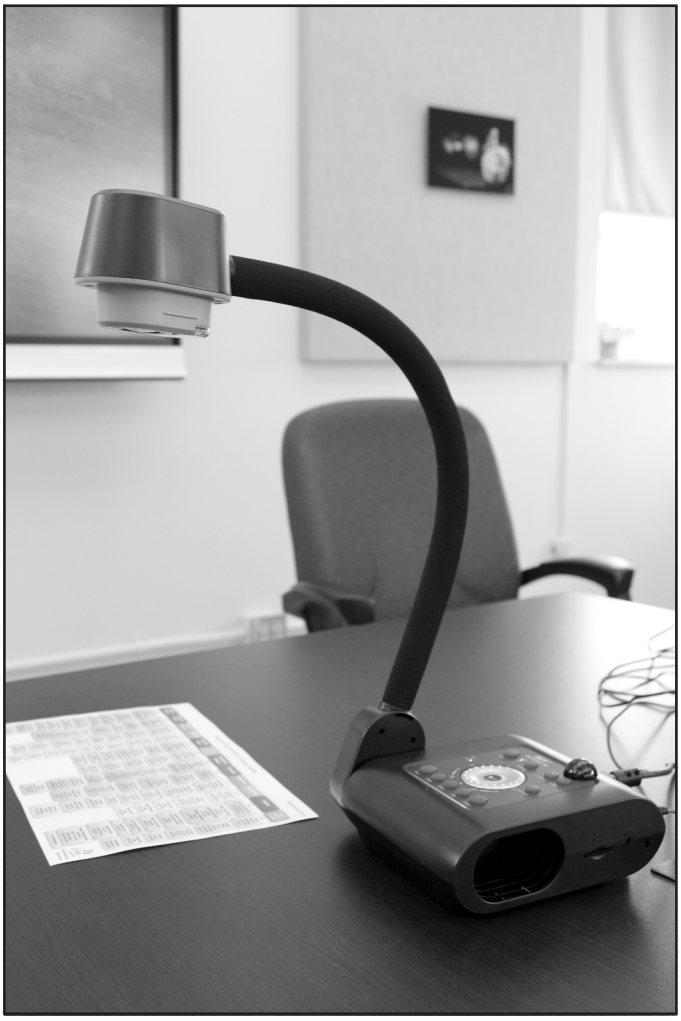
Society for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) annual conference

June 16-19, 2015 in Vancouver. http://www.stlhe.ca/conferences-events/stlhe-annual-conference/

Join us for Raising the Teaching Bar!

This term the VPETC instituted a new series of teaching talks, called *Raising the Teaching Bar*. These involve a short demonstration or talk about something related to teaching, followed by plenty of time for informal discussion. They are held at Col. Tucker's pub, on campus, every second Friday at 4:00 p.m. Subjects covered so far have included using a document camera in class; the hows and whys of booking classrooms; the use of exam wrappers to get students to evaluate their own studying and test-writing performance(see Loutfi, this issue); the use of case studies; and social media vs. D2L and email (see Clements, this issue).

We plan to start these up again in Fall 2015, so stay tuned for announcements. Everyone is welcome! (Anyone interested in presenting is invited to contact Lucy Wilson, lwilson@unb.ca.)



Pictured: Aaron Granger and his document camera

Using social media as a classroom learning platform

Jeff C. Clements, Biology

They are something that the vast majority of us are aware of and may see as a teaching barrier – social media (SM). SM are a set of relatively new and popular online tools whereby individuals can create profiles to communicate and keep up-to-date with the daily musings of their friends, family, acquaintances, or complete strangers. SM can consume a great deal of time in the daily lives of students, and can be a distractor in class if not monitored. However, SM can also be a useful teaching tool and can enhance student engagement by supplementing or adding to institutional classroom learning platforms (Said et al. 2014).

The case study

During the Winter 2015 semester I conducted a quantitative case study (REB file no. 007-2015) to compare the teaching-tool efficacy of SM versus other learning platforms. Specifically, I used available statistics from three communication platforms (D2L discussions, e-mail, and Facebook) to assess the independent engagement of students in BIOL1202, by sharing additional, relevant material that students could choose to interact with or not. No bonus marks were assigned for participating. Engagement was approximately 4 times higher on Facebook than through e-mail, although engagement was still relatively low; D2L was not used by students. Students used Facebook primarily to share pertinent information that they found independently (something I did not initially consider) and communicate with each other, while e-mail was primarily used to communicate with me. The results of this case study and my experience using Facebook helped elucidate some of the pros and cons of using SM as a teaching tool.

The biggest benefit of using SM as a learning platform is that most students attending university today are social media savvy, checking them regularly and *independently*. Despite having access to university-provided learning platforms (e.g. Desire2Learn, Blackboard, Moodle, etc.) and student e-mail accounts, many students check their SM accounts much more often (Clements, personal observations), simply because it is something they already *want* to check. Although most students are active on multiple SM platforms, some serve better than others as learning platforms.

In particular, Facebook (FB) is well suited to use as a learning platform because it allows users to create "closed groups" – a group that you can tailor to your course and personally moderate. In closed groups, the group administrator can control who can join the group, who can view/comment on material, and who can post material themselves. This allows an instructor/professor to create a group for a given course, only let students enrolled in the course into the group, and modify posting restrictions to coincide with what the instructor wants to get out of the group.

Another convenient feature of FB is the "chat" option. Using this option, the instructor/professor can chat with students in real-time and can even set "FB hours", where students can expect the instructor to be online and ready to chat. Furthermore, this option allows students in the group to chat with each other as well, with the potential to facilitate and expedite communication and enhance various course requirements (e.g. group work). Although this may seem to take more time and effort from the instructor, it can easily be synchronized with office hours to maximize student outreach and assistance.

Students can also have group notifications sent directly to their phone or tablet so that they can engage with the material instantaneously. Although such notifications can be activated on mobile devices for e-mail accounts and institutional learning platforms, this is typically a step that students must take on themselves upon university enrollment. Given that students already have FB notifications set up, they are likely to receive class messages more quickly via FB than other learning platforms (Sturges 2011, my study). This is not only useful for sharing course material, it is a great way to communicate last-minute updates to students (class cancellations, documents, etc.) as well.

FB also provides a variety of useful statistics which allow instructors/professors to evaluate how students are interacting with the material. On each post, instructors can see how many people and exactly who have seen a post, "liked" a post (primary level of engagement), and have commented on a post (deeper level of en-

gagement). These statistics can be used to assess student engagement, as well as assess how FB is operating for a particular course.

Although it is a great outlet for communicating and sharing material, there is a risk that students may be distracted by other aspects of SM, leading to a reduced level of understanding or engagement. For example, students may be more interested in what their friends are doing on the weekend rather than discussing course material. Given that online multi-tasking can hinder learning (Sana et al. 2013), caution should be taken in this regard when considering using SM as a learning platform.

Another potential problem is that not all students are SM savvy. This can limit the number of students joining and engaging in, for example, a FB group. Although students can be required to join FB and engage, this introduces many of the same hurdles as institutional learning platforms. As such, understanding class demographics is important.

Finally, using SM in synchrony with other platforms can be extremely time-consuming for instructors/professors. It is thus beneficial for educators to garner an understanding of classroom demographics before deciding to implement SM as a teaching platform. A well-defined class demographic can help educators determine whether or not SM may be a useful avenue to explore with the class.

Ultimately, SM (FB in particular) can be effectively utilized as classroom learning platforms, either synergistically with or in place of institutional classroom learning platforms. Given that the educational services provided by institutional platforms are available through FB, the familiarity that today's students have with FB makes it an optimal and convenient tool to foster learning at various levels. I plan to follow up on this case study and strictly implement FB as *the* learning platform in future courses to see how my results regarding independent engagement compare to those from mandatory engagement.

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Have a nice summer!
We'll be back in the fall!