

S2E5_v4_default

JOE KING: Teaching simultaneously online and in-person requires a unique approach, different from just the combination of the two. Here at Georgetown, we call it concurrent hybrid teaching. And if you'll join us on using that language, years from now you can tell your great, great, grandchildren, yeah, I was a bit of a spark plug back then. Remember-- concurrent hybrid teaching. No matter what you call it, in this episode, you'll find best practices and handy advice for teaching in-person and remote students together from a Georgetown classroom.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: Welcome to What We're Learning About Learning, a podcast about higher ed teaching and learning, created and produced by the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship, also known as CNDLS, at Georgetown University. I'm Kim Huisman Lubreski.

JOE KING: And I'm Joe King. For this episode, we talked with three faculty with lots of wisdom to share about their experiences teaching in a concurrent hybrid classroom. We wanted to know how they prepared, how they delivered, and how they problem solved when challenges arose, as they inevitably do. Their experiences run the gamut from a small graduate seminar to undergraduate classes of 150 students.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: We'll begin with Mimi Khuc, who teaches classes ranging from 25 to 45 students in the Disability Studies Program at Georgetown. She was in person last semester but implemented a concurrent hybrid model from the start to offer students flexibility.

MIMI KHUC: I knew nothing about what the technology was in the classroom. And so, I actually-- I got one of those emails like, if you need help, email us, from tech people. So, I actually scheduled an appointment the day before classes started so I could visit my classroom and look at it. And then they actually within 10 minutes, walked me through the tech. And from my understanding, each classroom is equipped now with lots of cool tech to help with hybrid.

And so they're-- in my classroom, there was two cameras that are integrated into the computer system there, and then Zoom is also integrated. So, basically, if I opened Zoom, it would engage the two cameras in my classroom, and I could have them point either at the students or at me. And there was a mic, a central mic in the classroom, that could pick up all the students.

And so I just opened a Zoom link at the beginning of every class. And so students could choose to attend in-person or attend via Zoom. And if they attended via Zoom, they usually could hear the discussion in class. I was impressed with the way the mic could pick up the discussion.

JOE KING: We also spoke with Shannon Mooney, a Staff Data Scientist at Georgetown, who teaches in the Master's Program in Learning Design and Technology at Georgetown. In order to prepare to teach in a concurrent hybrid format, Shannon partnered with both her TA, Alex Chugunova, who was a graduate student in the Linguistics Program at the time, and with CETS, Georgetown's Classroom Educational Technology Services.

SHANNON MOONEY: We have a really, really wonderful CETS staff member who has just been partnering with us the whole semester. And she's just totally amazing. And so she trained us on how to use the classroom before the beginning of classes. That was really helpful. And it was also really helpful having Alex there with me.

Because I was thinking about the class on one level, which was the level of like, OK, how do I do what I want to do in this classroom? And Alex was thinking about it on another level, which I think was sort of bridging the divide between me, the instructor, and the student. So she was thinking logistically, like, what do I do to troubleshoot this if it's not working? Let me make sure I'm testing out this to make sure I know how to do it.

So then on the first day of class, we basically just walked in the room and started, assumed our separate roles. And I would say Alex is just a huge part of the success of the class so far because she's the person going down the to-do list before the start of every class making sure everything's in place.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: We definitely wanted to know more about the to-do list Alex was using before each class started. She was happy to talk us through it.

ALEX CHUGUNOVA: Make sure the cameras work. Make sure the mics work. And right when class starts, make sure everyone can see and hear clearly and get verbal and visual feedback on this. So usually when we start class, I'm like, can you hear me OK? Or I send it in the chat. It's also paying attention to participation overall. If I see a student disappearing suddenly, I check in and make sure they're doing all right.

So, yeah, it started off as a real checklist. But now it's really mental. So it's-- yeah, it's just the audio, the visual, and also the positioning of the room, where the chairs are facing, how they're constructed. And with COVID, it has become a lot harder because we've got the social distancing aspect. And also the room is different.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: Shannon had actually taught in a concurrent hybrid format before the pandemic. So we asked her to share more about how she prepares and designs her coursework with this in mind. She shared how she streamlines the content to place both remote and in-person students on an even playing field.

SHANNON MOONEY: I intentionally decided to refocus on one thing, which was just a really solid foundation in the recent research in learning analytics. So, instead of trying to do everything to try to become learning analytics practitioners in the space of three months, what students are doing is just becoming familiar with what people in the field talk about.

And I think that works for this program. Something that graduate students really value is just the opportunity to participate in class and so to be able to run it as a seminar-style class is what I tried to do this semester. So, in the same way that I whittled down to the readings and learning analytics, I'm also whittling down the format of class into mainly a discussion-focused class.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JOE KING: For other professors, the necessities of COVID have sparked their first experiences with concurrent hybrid teaching. Mark Rom, who teaches in the McCourt School of Public Policy and the Government Department in the college, has classes that range from 15 to 150 students. To Mark, hybrid learning presents challenges as well as opportunities.

MARK ROM: Before the pandemic if students missed class, they just missed the class. So that was a missed opportunity for the students to learn from me. It's a missed opportunity for me to connect with them. So now I can connect with the students in-person if they are able to or by Zoom if they're not. But I've made it clear to my students that their health and well-being is paramount. And so if they're not feeling well physically, if they're not feeling well emotionally or psychologically, they can Zoom in. That is

fine. That is an acceptable option. What's important to me is that they engage in the content in the course and engage with other students.

JOE KING: We were also curious how students respond to the concurrent hybrid environment. What kind of questions did they have about this format? Here's Shannon again.

SHANNON MOONEY: So, remote students are always really concerned about their ability to participate, as well they should be. So first of all, there's just the barrier to entry. So the question of like, this course says it's in-person. I'm in Maine or wherever. Can I take this course? There's a classroom listed. I'm not going to be there. And so I was surprised-- so that's happened every semester, is that the student reaching out saying, I'm in California. Do you mind?

But this semester that was happening as well. And from the faculty side, we're thinking, of course everything's hybrid. Of course we have maximum flexibility for every student situation and where they need to be at any given time.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: Remote students sometimes wonder whether they'll have the same level or quality of attention as the in-person students. This is a concern Shannon has been working hard to assuage.

SHANNON MOONEY: Another concern that the remote students have voiced to some of my colleagues who I've been talking to is just that they don't want to be out of focus in the class, either, that they don't want to feel like there's more attention on their in-person peers than on them. And so, there is, among some, a concern that by having an in-person-- if you're a remote student, you might be concerned that it's taking something away from you to refocus some resources or some attention onto in-person students. And so for me going into the semester that's meant that above all else I've been trying to prioritize attention, not just equity and attention among in-person and remote students, but actually attention to the remote students more so than the in-person students.

JOE KING: Mark also uses strategies to make sure the remote students feel included. You know, I'm starting to sense a theme.

MARK ROM: You know, the draw of humans is to the faces in the classroom. I know that. I love that. I mean, when you can actually look at students in the face-- like, I'm looking Mimi in the face right now. It's like, she's right here with me. It's important to make the people on Zoom feel like they are part of the classroom also. I am attentive from time to time to look directly into the Zoom camera and talk to it so the students will know that I'm talking to them even if they're not there.

I do a lot more cold calling. I try to do by actually calling on people's names throughout the chat just to say hello. I don't cold call them with questions that are embarrassing, but, Tracy, how are you doing today?

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: Faculty may want to try bringing students together across modalities in breakout rooms, combining in-person and remote students. As Mark Rom notes, small group discussion using breakout rooms is uniquely easy in the Zoom environment.

MARK ROM: Breakout rooms are fantastic. So when I do breakout rooms in my class, we will have a chance for a breakout room in the Zoom, assuming that there are a few students that can do a breakout room. We're also going to breakout rooms in the physical classroom so we can have the small groups conversations. And then, as part of the same experience, I can turn to those on Zoom, what was the outcome of their breakout discussion? I can turn to my students in the class and ask them for their breakout results.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JOE KING: It's not easy for faculty to have their eyes in two places. So we asked them how they ease the burden of multitasking. Let's start with Mimi, and then we'll hear from Shannon.

MIMI KHUC: I'm not going to lie. It is more work. I like you calling it a cognitive burden. It does require multitasking, looking at multiple screens, facilitating more across platforms than you would normally have to. Some of the ways that I manage labor in my classroom is that I think about like, I can put my energy to do that, to make it more accessible to students, and to allow students to participate, and then I'll just take energy from somewhere else.

Does that make sense? Like, you have to think about how to manage your labor, right? And so, it can't be self sacrifice where you do every-- you know, you put all of your self into it. I have to think about like, I am not going to spend time doing xyz because I need to be more present in the classroom.

SHANNON MOONEY: On the level of seeing each other, I had to sacrifice my ability to show slides at all times because when you're showing slides, all of the remote students faces get very small, both for us in the classroom and for each other. And so, if your goal is to facilitate discussion, then what that means is that you have to be ready to-- if you're sharing a slide, to unshare your slide in order to get people to talk to each other.

Or to think about, do I really need these slides for this? Or can we just refer directly to the reading? And then we all have the reading pulled up separately, but we're able to see each other's faces still really large in Zoom in a way that if you displayed slides, then everybody would get very small.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: Shannon talked about how she planned in advance to manage the concurrent hybrid environment knowing that her attention would be divided between these two very different things.

SHANNON MOONEY: It's all about space and configuration. I've never thought more about the classroom space as a physical space. I mean, even on the level of the typical front of the classroom, where you walk in the door and there's a stage, and the podium, and the drop-down monitor, I've actually moved to the side of the classroom instead of using that space that's set up to be the front of the classroom.

Just because it enables me to have kind of a more naturalistic interaction with the classroom camera, which is how my remote students will be seeing me and will be seeing their in-person peers as well as access to some chalkboards that are along the side of the room that we've been trying to experiment with using to see if remote students can see writing or figures on the chalkboards.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: Shannon also mentioned the importance of being explicit about your commitment to supporting remote students, and it can be helpful to engage in-person students as partners in this effort.

SHANNON MOONEY: The very first day of class, I talked about making sure that remote students are getting what they need to get out of the class. And I think setting that tone for the in-person students meant that now the in-person students are kind of partners with me on making sure that the classroom experience is equitable for everybody too.

JOE KING: Another way to use the technology to everyone's advantage and create equity between students in different modalities is to ask them to work together on class notes. They can be together in the online space working on notes. And students who were absent can access student-generated materials from the day.

MIMI KHUC: But also, I adopted this in the pandemic-- collective class notes. So there is one Google Doc that all of my students are on taking notes on. And they share it. And in that way, if one student drops off,

if one student can't come, if one student has some kind of Wi-Fi issue, all the notes are there for every student to see, whether they're there for part of the class, all of the class, have to miss class because they're ill. And that's how I kind of lowered the stakes of things having to be perfect and right for everybody.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: No matter what, surprises will occur and not everything will be perfect. Here are Mimi and Mark reflecting on some of those moments.

MIMI KHUC: So, hybrid allows them to kind of figure out how to best engage in a way that meets their needs at the time. And for me, teaching Disability Studies is really about access, creating access in the class where everyone can participate with the least amount of obstacles. So I just taught Zoom this week, since we're not in-person yet.

And one thing that went wrong was my screen wouldn't share. Sometimes Zoom is just cranky and doesn't do the things that you want it to do. So, I just dropped a link into Zoom and all the students could open it up themselves, like the document that we're all looking at. And in the classroom that's also possible. Like, if I can't project, if I can't show something, I will-- because I have my laptop or my phone-- quickly email the students, like, here's a thing you can look at together.

I make my syllabus fully cloud based. So all my readings are linked. You can click on it and go to a cloud-based document to read it. I create cloud-based documents, so it's really easy to quickly send a Google Doc to the students so they can see something if I'm not able to show it to them on the screen.

MARK ROM: I guess one problem that I've had is that sometimes the audio can be tricky. Sometimes my students actually have their Zooms open in the class so they can participate in Poland, for example. Since I'm teaching a large class, I have one teaching assistant monitor the chat, try to solve tech issues when you get feedback. I've had the problem with my phone on. You know, I forget to mute my phone, and so you get the feedback issues. And I ask my students because they often have suggestions about how to solve tech problems.

MIMI KHUC: I will revoice things, which is actually a pretty common access hack in disability justice circles. So, if there's not an amplified sound-- sometimes I got conferences or at events-- the person who does have amplified sound can just revoice what somebody else says. It may seem cumbersome, but it actually can slow down the conversation in really nice ways as well.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JOE KING: Lastly, we wanted to know if they had any advice or suggestions for faculty or students who are considering this format. Here's Shannon.

SHANNON MOONEY: Your students are very kind. And they want to be supportive of you. And they want you to do a good job, obviously. And so letting them know how they can help you, maybe just by them being aware that they're your guinea pigs this semester, might be helpful to what they show up with to the class. And also, saying that you want to keep the lines of communication open and then actively-- or proactively keeping the lines of communication open with your students with that framing of, this is my first semester doing this. How's it going?

JOE KING: Shannon thinks about teaching as a social activity, where the experiences from different students are assets to be shared and learned from.

SHANNON MOONEY: Alex and I are both sociolinguists. And so for us, we understand teaching and learning as an inherently social experience and, given that, what we're doing is all social. How do we take advantage of that and do that better? And, yeah, it's by harnessing the social element of it.

I position the student as the expert on their own experience, both explicitly by saying that and also just in everything that I do. I try to adopt the vantage point of like, I'm going to try to put myself in my students' shoes, but I'm never going to make assumptions, or try to speak for a student, or have my perception of their experience overrule their perception of their experience. So, my students are just aware of that so they feel totally invited to speak to their experience of the class and know that that's something that I'm going to take really seriously.

JOE KING: In the end, we heard a major theme throughout the conversation. Leaning into the social aspects of teaching and learning-- whether partnering with a TA or a co-instructor, or co-creating with students and getting their feedback-- makes the experience more enriching for everyone involved and that transcends modalities. Whether you are in-person, remote, or concurrent hybrid, connecting with students and taking the technological and pedagogical steps in order to do so remains our paramount job.

KIM HUISMAN LUBRESKI: We hope you've enjoyed this episode of What We're Learning About Learning. This episode was made possible by many people at CNDLS, including Molly Chehak, Meghan Modafferi, David Ebenbach, Eleri Syverson, and Stefanie Chae. Big thanks to Mimi Khuc, Mark Rom, Shannon Mooney, and Alexandra Chugunova for sharing their insights and experiences with us. Thanks also to Milo Stout for creating original music for the podcast. For more information about our podcast series and our guests, check out our show notes where you'll find links to previous episodes, information about how to share your thoughts and ideas with us, our website and blog, and other resources. Again, I'm Kim Huisman Lubreski.

JOE KING: And I'm Joe King. Thanks for listening.

[MUSIC PLAYING]