

# FSB Future Teaching Committee Spring 2021 Report – 06/02/2021

The purpose of this document is to report on the work and findings of the ad hoc FSB Future Teaching Committee at the end of the Spring 2021 term. It includes a summary of the committee's activities and methodology, our observations and conclusions, and our recommendations to the dean's office.

## Committee Members

**Chair:** Michael Conger (ESP)

**Members:** Tim Eaton (ACC), Greg Niemesh (ECO), David Yin (FIN), Arthur Carvalho (ISA), Megan Gerhardt (MGT), Sina Esteky (MKT), Becky Crews (FYIC)

**Dean's Liaison:** Bryan Ashenbaum

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## 1. OUR CHARGE

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The committee received the following charge from Associate Dean Bryan Ashenbaum.

- Curate a list of teaching practices / learnings from the "COVID period " (Spring 2020-Spring 2021) that should be retained and integrated with "standard" F2F teaching best practices in the future.
- Consider which technologies should be considered for incorporation into teaching for a best practice approach. Which technologies should be used outside the classroom to augment classroom learning?
- Deliver report to FSB Dean and Executive Committee by May 31, 2021.

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## 2. OUR METHODOLOGY

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### Data Collection

The committee was composed of representatives from each of the FSB departments and the FYIC. Committee members also had working positions teaching and/or serving on committees for several major program areas and centers (e.g. PRIME, Global Studies, Center for Business Leadership, etc.) Committee members tended to be the person from each of these respective units most involved in testing/supporting new technologies, services, and techniques for teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. We collected data from all available stakeholders from each of these units including faculty, students, staff, and external partners (e.g. guest speakers, coaches, etc) via surveys, interviews, and informal discussion. Questions raised with these stakeholders included (but were by no means limited to) the following:

- **Understanding how people are thinking about "returning to normal".**
  - How are you feeling about "returning to normal?"
  - What are the things you have missed most about teaching/learning in "the before times?" Why?
  - What are the things you HAVEN'T missed from "the before times?" Why?
  - Crystal ball time... what do you think "normal" teaching/learning will look like for you in the next year? What about beyond that, when COVID is no longer a significant factor in our daily lives?

- **Understanding what people have learned over the last year.**
  - What have you learned about your students over the last year?
  - What have you learned about the courses you teach and your discipline over the last year?
  - What have you learned about Miami (your colleagues/dept, FSB, Roudebush) over the last year?
  - What have you learned about yourself (as a teacher and as a human) over the last year?
- **Listening for Ideas/Insights/Innovations**
  - Can you tell me about any tools/technologies you've used (or used in a new way) over the last year? What ideas, insights, observations relevant to teaching can you share about them?
  - Can you tell me about any techniques/pedagogies you've used (or used in a new way) over the last year? What ideas, insights, observations relevant to teaching can you share about them?
  - Can you tell me about any new ways of thinking (perspective/mindset/worldview) that you've considered (or adopted) over the last year? What ideas, insights, observations relevant to teaching can you share about this?

## Analysis

The committee analyzed the data described above looking for common themes and potential insights. Topics considered included (but were by no means limited to) the following:

- **Engagement** - anything related to how students engage with course activities/experiences, faculty, and each other
- **Flexibility** - anything about faculty or students' ability to have control over their schedule, work distribution, etc.
- **Communication** - anything about how/when/where faculty and students communicate with each other
- **Pedagogy/Design** - anything related to how/why we design/run our courses, and, by extension, activities, assignments, learning outcomes, etc.
- **Collaboration** - anything about the ways in which we collaborate with our colleagues/students and collaboration between students. (and related benefits/challenges)
- **Workload** - anything about the energy, time, resources required (from faculty, students, staff, etc) to make our courses happen.
- **Specific Teaching-Related Activities** – including but not limited to...
  - Content Delivery/Consumption
  - Creation of Course Content/Materials
  - Individual Student Assignment/Project Work
  - Team Student Assignment/Project Work
  - Exams/Quizzes

- Office Hours / One-on-One Interaction with Students
- Communication (to/from students)
- Grading/Evaluation
- Client-Based Work

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### 3. DELIVERABLES

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#### **Guidebook for Faculty**

The committee assembled the most salient points from our analysis into an infographic-style guidebook for FSB faculty. Our intent was to create a brief and simple document to give faculty some insight into others' thoughts and experiences, and to serve as a starting point for considering how they may develop their own teaching going forward. It also contains a selected list of commonly recommended technology resources faculty may explore on their own.

#### **Observations and Recommendations for the Dean's Office**

The remaining sections of this document outline the committee's observations and recommendations for the Dean's office with respect to the charge given to us.

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### 4. OBSERVATIONS / CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM OUR RESEARCH

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The following is a select list of key observations/conclusions drawn from listening to FSB faculty, students, staff, and other stakeholders.

- Over the last 18 months, we have come to realize that we are capable of far greater adaptability, creativity, and growth than we ever thought possible.
- We have also all experienced being pushed up to and well beyond our physical, mental, and emotional limits. The cost to each of us individually and as a community has been both high and palpable.
- Meaningful, in-person connection and vibrant, interactive, community are an essential part of our culture at FSB. The loss of these during the pandemic was a serious hardship for students, faculty, and staff. There is universal agreement that reestablishing and developing these relationships and connections even further should be our top priority as we move forward.
- There is also widespread concern that, absent thoughtful consideration, a return to "normal" could easily lead to future burnout and/or missed opportunities for a better future.
- Finally, while we share many experiences from the last year and many hopes for the future, we also found that there are many important differences among individuals in the FSB community; In particular, in terms of bearing the burden of implementing campus restrictions and delivering essential services, being impacted by the practical, physical, mental, emotional, and economic toll of the pandemic, and our differing capabilities/beliefs/approaches/preferences with respect to course delivery, communication, collaboration, etc.

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## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Recommended Principles for Teaching/Learning in 2021 and Beyond

- Individual instructors should be entrusted with making modality/technology decisions for their courses (collaboration within close teaching teams can also be very important e.g. FYIC, PRIME).
- Openness to many tools/approaches/techniques should be favored over forced standardization to a narrow set of tools.
- We should favor tools/technologies/approaches that...
  - Prioritize individual growth and well-being of all students, faculty, and staff.
  - Prioritize the building/maintaining of vibrant, healthy, respectful community for all students, faculty, and staff.
  - Maximize interactive and engaged learning (e.g. tools for collaboration, discussion, and live interaction such as Trello, Packback, Miro, Menti, and Goosechase)
  - Maximize the quality of faculty/student and student/student interaction, especially those with higher person-to-person engagement (e.g. class discussion/activities, office hours.)
  - Minimize the high costs of individuals' time and attention inherent in more passive interactions (e.g. large meetings, consuming large amounts of course materials, etc.)
  - Minimize the high costs of individual's time and attention inherent administrative work and communication (e.g. favoring tools for project management and collaboration over increasing the volume of ad hoc email or slack messages exchanged)
- Efficiency, speed, and convenience, while valuable, should purposely and necessarily be given lower priority to these more important considerations.

### Recommendations for Increased Support Investment in 2021 and Beyond

- Opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to build and enhance connections, community, growth, and well-being (e.g. learning communities, student orgs, service learning projects, cross-campus collaborations, tools for collaboration with partners outside of Miami, etc.)
- Tools and activities to help create more rich and meaningful interactions in the learning environment (e.g. collaborative whiteboards, interactive polls, discussion boards, in-person meet-ups/discussion groups/brown bags/etc.)
- Opportunities for faculty to interact, collaborate, and learn from one another as teacher/scholars (e.g. learning communities, brown-bags, online communities, etc.)
- Tools, services, and practices that help reduce the administrative load on faculty and staff (e.g. calendar scheduling services like Calendly, Doodle, or When2Meet; Communication management services like SaneBox; Project collaboration tools like Asana or Trello; Practices like Slack's "do not disturb" option that help people set boundaries to protect necessary time for focused work and thought.)

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## 6. UNANSWERED QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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As mentioned in Section 4 above, we believe a wise and successful return to "normal" requires thoughtful consideration of all the issues and ideas raised above on an ongoing basis. In addition, we offer the following "big questions" as just a few examples of topics we hope will receive attention from the dean's office (and we hope will also be raised in discussions among FSB faculty, staff, and students.)

- **What *should* we be doing as we move forward?** – We have learned that we *can* do much more with technology, with our time, and with our attention, than we realized, but what *should* our teaching/learning be like going forward? What do we want it to be like?
- **What will the new “normal” look like?** – Faculty, staff, and students universally reported overwhelm, distress, and burnout from the experience of 2020. Will going back to normal be an improvement or will we end up carrying the baggage of 2020 as additional work, pressure, and stress with us as we resume our routines? What will the norms and expectations be for classroom management, faculty/student interaction, office hours, teaching loads, expectations to be “always on”, etc?
- **How can we champion humane teaching and learning?** – We got a strong sense from faculty, students, and staff that our individual and collective health and well-being, the challenging of our minds, the strengthening of our abilities, and the quality and meaningfulness of our relationships and community ought to be our highest priority. In contrast, new tools/technology/techniques most often offer improvements in speed/ubiquity of connection, efficiency, and convenience, often at the expense of the aforementioned priorities. As we move forward, how can we use these tools to pursue the things that will help us thrive and not merely settling for faster/easier/cheaper?