

# **A Flexible Learning Framework**

eucen

University Lifelong Learning  
Open Fora 2021

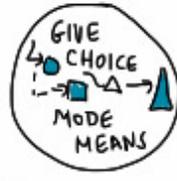
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# THE FLEXIBLE CLASSROOM

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What is it?



TEAM-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEV



ENABLE & SUPPORT

## AFFORDANCE

DESIGN IMPLIES USAGE

CHALLENGE IMPACTING SYSTEM AT ALL LEVELS



CULTURE EATS

STUDENTS ACCEPT POWER

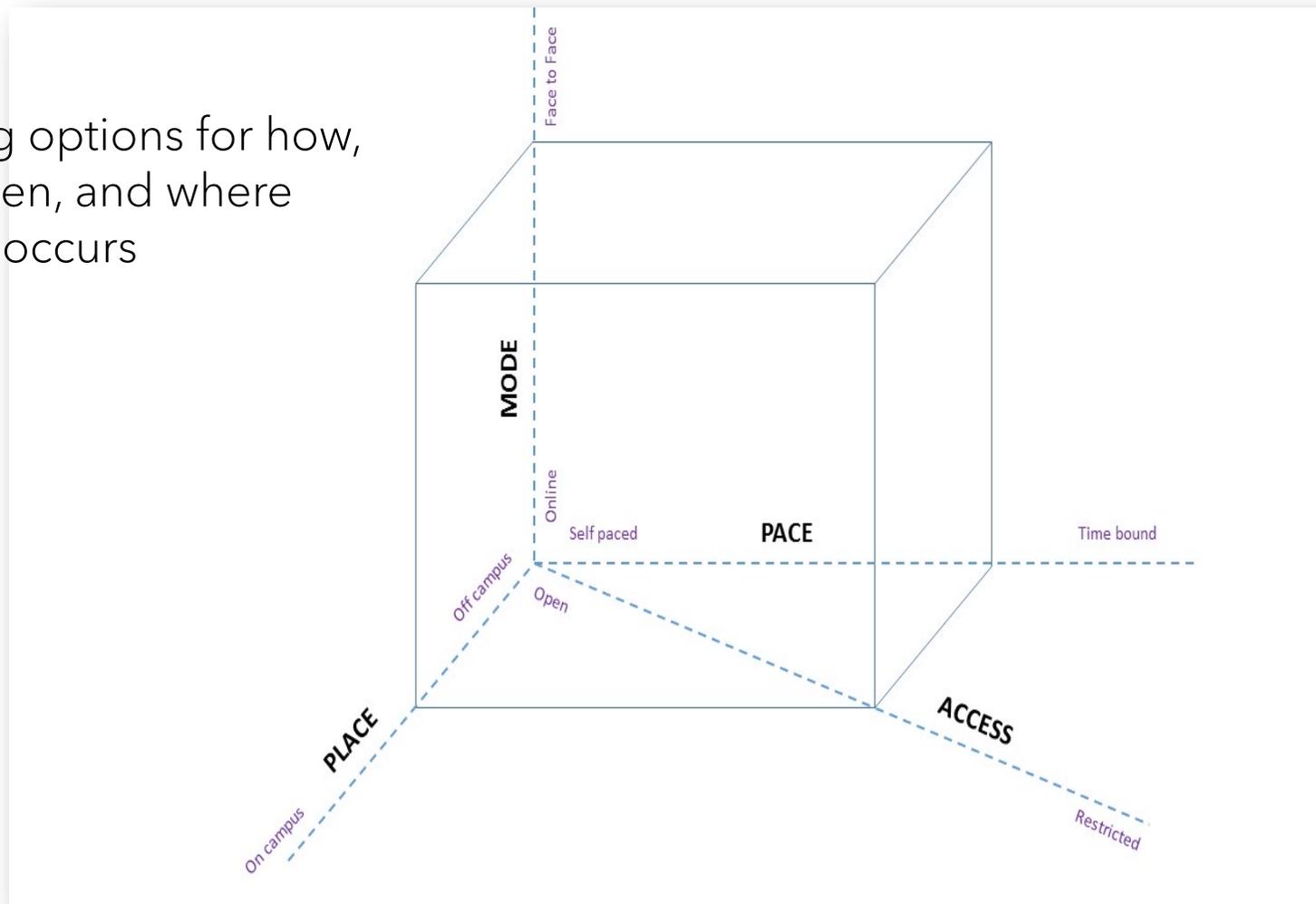
DIVERSE COLLABORATION EXPERTISE COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE  
CAN'T TEACH ALONE

TEAMWORK IS NECESSARY

NEED TO RECOGNIZE

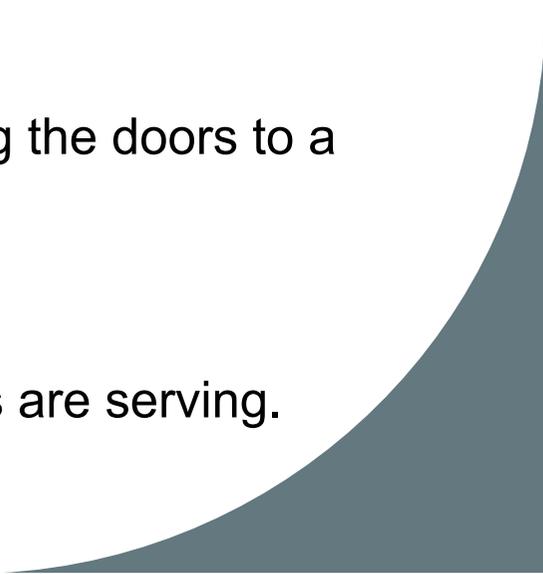
# ? INQUIRY IS ESSENTIAL

Providing options for how, what, when, and where learning occurs



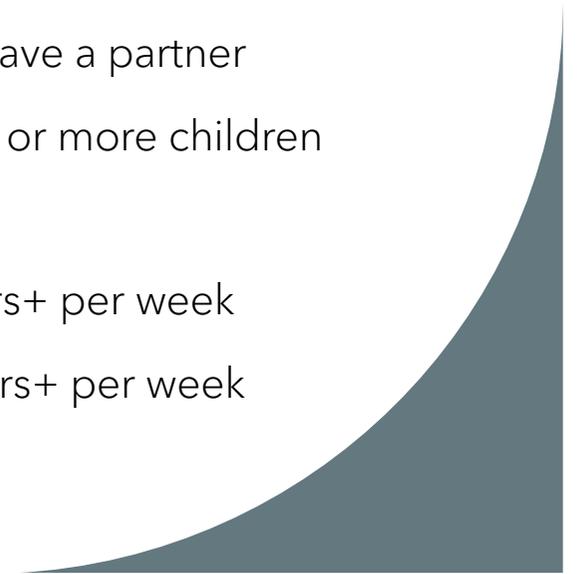
Pedagogical space for flexible learning (adapted from Gordon, 2014)

## What does it involve?

- Rethinking teaching and learning paradigms and policies, practices, and organizational culture that supports traditional forms of delivery.
  - Giving all stakeholders a voice in discussions with student success at the forefront.
  - Democratizing higher education institutions and opening the doors to a range of diverse students.
  - Helping all students be successful.
  - Being inclusive of the range of students that universities are serving.
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## Context

- Steadily increasing enrollments  
26,696 students in 2008 to 39,931  
in 2018 to 41,000 in 2020  
Projections 57,000 by 2030
- Regional population growth
- Increasing numbers of students  
graduating from secondary  
schools and seeking post-  
secondary education
- 37% - first-generation (neither parent  
completed a bachelor's degree)
- 19% - minority background
- 30% - 25 years old or older
- 38% - married or have a partner
- 17% - support one or more children
- 81% - employed
- 49% - work 21 hours+ per week
- 24% - work 31 hours+ per week



## **The impetus for flexible learning**

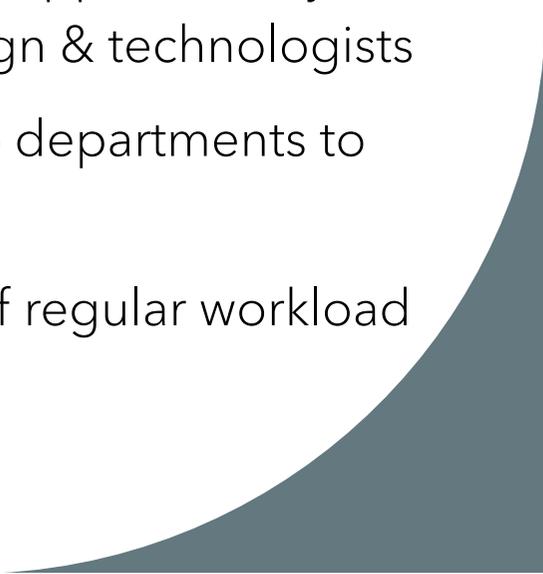
- Growing student body
- Limited physical space or budget to expand the physical infrastructure
- Increasingly diverse student body
- Response - extend capacity with flexible delivery
- Pre-COVID



# **Strategy & implementation**



## **Initial steps**

- Restructuring - merged distance learning & faculty development
  - Office of teaching and learning - increased funding to support faculty & build expertise; build infrastructure - instructional design & technologists
  - Decentralized online course scheduling and budget to departments to increase ownership
  - Eliminated stipend for teaching online courses - part of regular workload
  - Continued stipend for online course development
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## Shared Understanding

Nurturing a shared discourse around flexible learning

- Flexible learning definition and theoretical framework
- Flexible learning awareness campaign (Fall of each year)
- Annual Flexible Learning Report
- Flexible learning web area

## Shared Governance

Gathering advice and guidance on flexible learning from faculty and students

- Faculty Development Coaches
- Faculty Advisory Group for competency based education
- Faculty Advisory Group for open educational resources
- Faculty Research Group for hybrid learning
- Student Collaborators on flexible curriculum

## Faculty Development & Recognition

Providing faculty development opportunities to enhance teaching in flexible modes

- Faculty Certificate of Completion in Course Design and Curriculum Development
- Faculty Certificate of Completion in Teaching for Flexible Learning
- Evidence toward Higher Education Academy Fellowship
- Evidence toward Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP)
- Financial incentives for some projects
- Showcasing good practice (Hybrid Showcase, OER Spotlight, Faculty Showcase)

## Student Success

Supporting students' ability to thrive in an online environment

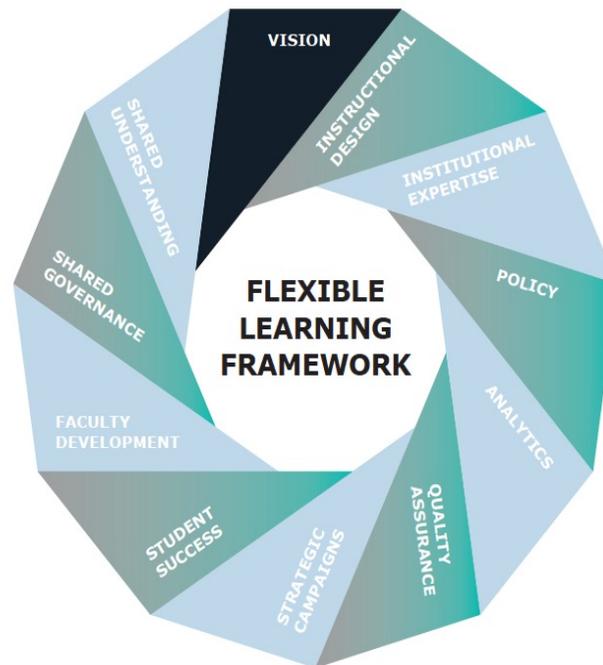
- Orientation module for students who are new to online and hybrid learning
- Student support information within all Canvas courses
- Student training for Canvas (2016)

## Strategic Campaigns

Managing a portfolio of short-term projects to accelerate the development of flexible learning offerings

- Hybrid is the New Normal (2016-2017)
- 20 by 2020: OER in highly enrolled courses (2016-2020)
- Competency Based Education pilot project (2016-2018)
- Flexible Learning Strategy (2016-2018)

**Vision** UVU offers an array of delivery methods designed to reflect students' goals and the region's educational needs.



UVU's holistic approach to supporting the development of high quality flexible learning opportunities

## Instructional Design

Providing high quality training and support for faculty who are redesigning courses or programs

- FlexStudio: Research-informed, intensive workshop experience for designing and redesigning courses
- Dedicated support from Instructional Designers, Instructional Technologists, and Course Specialists

## Institutional Expertise

Developing internal expertise to support flexible learning

- Office of Teaching and Learning 'Champions' support various aspects of flexible learning
- External experts serve as consultants to UVU
- Speaker Series for faculty to learn more about key initiatives
- Regional events and activities hosted by the Office of Teaching and Learning (e.g. Open Education Symposium)

## Policy & Infrastructure

Collaborating to create a supportive infrastructure for flexible learning

- Guidance for Policy 610 (Credit Hour and Seat Time) for various modes
- Training to support Policy 522 (Experiential Credit) through portfolio assessment
- Stakeholder meetings to address and lower barriers

## Analytics

Using data to support decision making for flexible learning at the College level

- Annual Flexible Learning Report
- Percentage of programs online and hybrid
- Pass rates across flexible modes
- Flexible learning data dashboard

## Quality Assurance

Assuring the quality of flexible learning offerings

- Pre-launch Course Review
- Periodic Course Review and Refresh
- Pre-catalogue checkpoint
- Best practice repository (Teaching and Learning Commons)

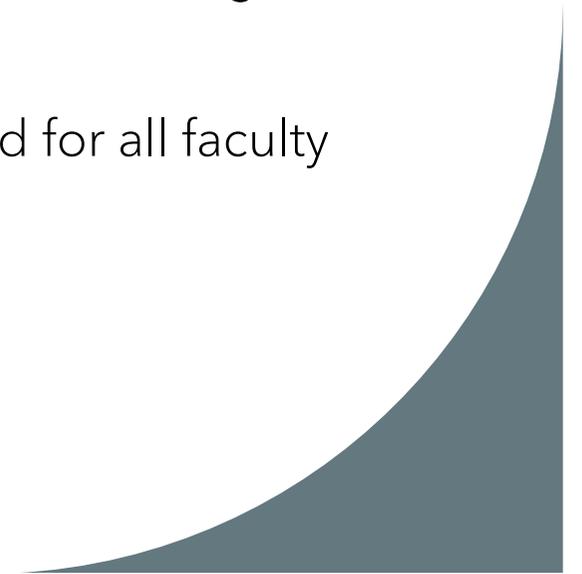
## **Vision**

- The vision for flexible learning - aligned with the university's mission and strategic plan
- Goal - offer a variety of delivery modalities
  - Reflect student demographics
  - Address increasing enrollments
  - Meet diverse scheduling needs
  - Decrease time to graduation



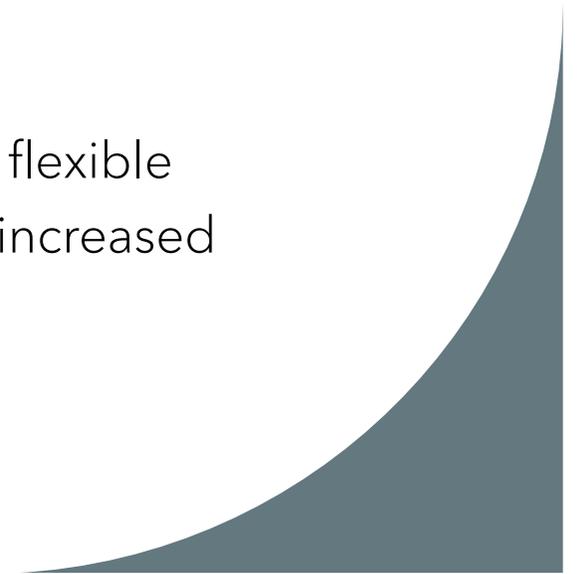
## **Instructional design**

- Additional instructional designers hired
- Workshops created to assist faculty members with course redesign for new delivery modalities
- Training for online teaching implemented and required for all faculty with a stipend for completion



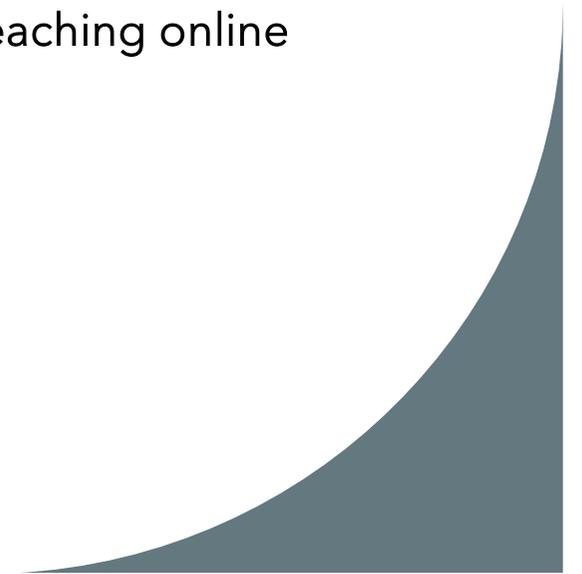
## **Institutional expertise**

- Trained staff in the office of teaching & learning
- Prioritized hiring needs
- Brought in consultants and guest speakers.
- Developed staff champions/experts for key aspects of flexible learning - opportunities for growth and engagement; increased motivation.



## **Policy and infrastructure**

- Policies and guidelines related to online instruction reviewed and amended
  - re-organized center for teaching and learning
  - modified compensation to faculty for developing and teaching online classes
  - eliminated fees for students taking online courses
  - budget decentralization
  - shifted responsibility for scheduling and other logistics



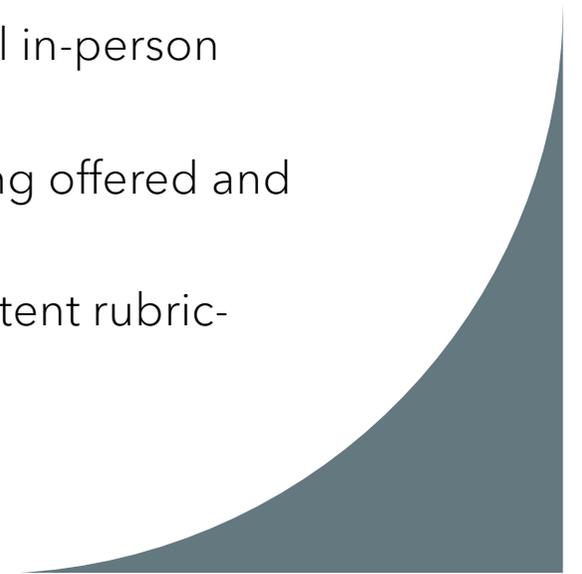
# **Analytics**

- Data collected to inform decisions and shared with stakeholders.
- Regular updates on progress and challenges provided to key decision makers
- Data dashboards - tracked numbers of sections, percentages of sections, student success measures for different delivery modalities



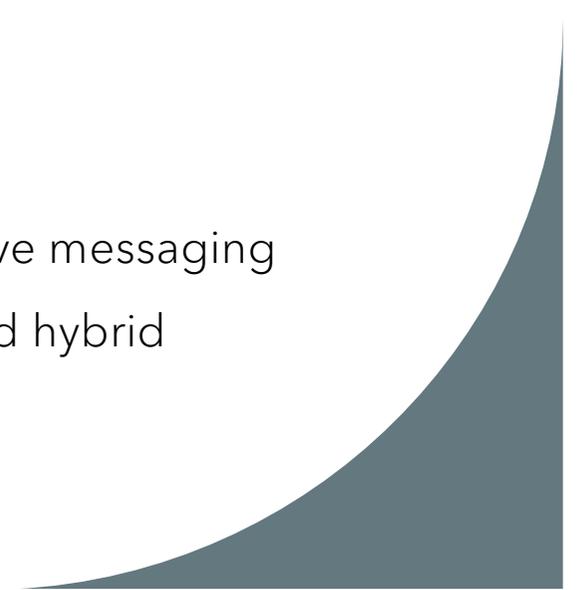
# Quality assurance

- Peer review of online and hybrid courses
- Faculty-driven and under the direction of the colleges and schools.
- Developed greater expertise among the faculty, increased confidence in the quality of online and hybrid offerings.
- Subject to more scrutiny and quality control than traditional in-person courses
- Online and hybrid courses need to be certified before being offered and must be reviewed every 3 years.
- Faculty member quality reviewers are trained, follow consistent rubric-based standards, and are paid a stipend for their work



## Strategic campaigns

- On-going promotional campaigns designed to raise awareness and generate wide support.  
Hybrid is the New Normal  
Hybrid is Double Awesome  
20 by 2020
- Campaigns utilized technology and multimedia with creative messaging
- Goal - increase the number of courses offered in online and hybrid modalities.



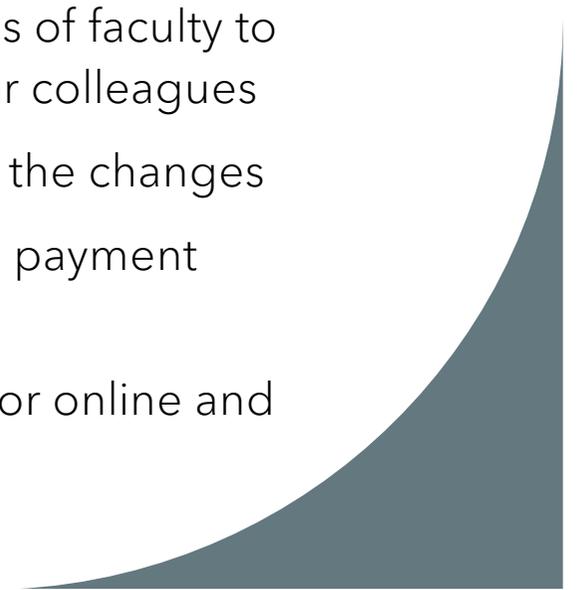
## **Student success**

- Coordination with other task force groups and committees
- Attention to specific student populations (e.g., first-generation students, non-traditional students)
- Ensure that students informed and well-prepared, had 24/7 support for technology
- Orientation videos and tutorials developed - both general and course-specific
- Measures related to student success tracked and widely available



## Faculty development and recognition

- Teaching excellence certificate programs developed to help faculty learn strategies for new delivery modalities and technologies (greatly expanded during COVID-19)
- Recognition provided with award, showcase, honor, and stipend schemes - increased during the pandemic to recognize the willingness of faculty to learn, change, and share their insights and growth with their colleagues
- Stipends and other forms of recognition helped accelerate the changes
- Many trainings involved a considerable investment of time; payment required evidence of application of the concepts learned.
- Award programs developed - design and delivery awards for online and hybrid courses; limited in number and fairly prestigious

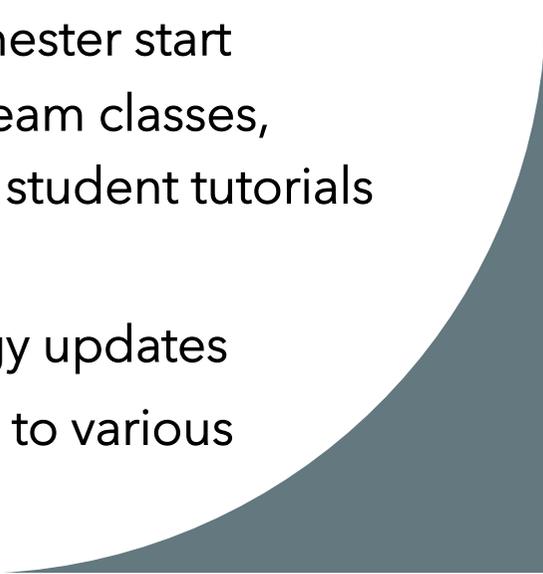


## Shared governance

- Faculty advisory groups formed related to various flexible delivery initiatives
- Evolved and changed over time
  - faculty oversight for quality assurance with logistical support from teaching and learning office
  - committee of faculty and administrators with oversight for various aspects of flexible learning -
  - collected data that showed students who took one online course had higher retention and graduation rates than those who did not enroll in online courses
  - student-centered argument for expanding online offerings more compelling than administrative directive



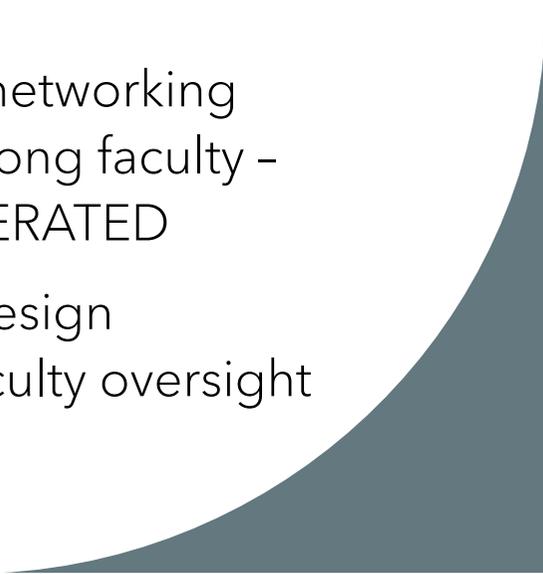
## Shared understanding

- On-going and critical area
  - Making information transparent, visible, and widely available.
    - trainings sponsored by the teaching and learning office
    - monthly email featuring timely topics such as a semester start checklist, trainings and practice sessions for live stream classes, video tutorials, learning management system skills, student tutorials and log in steps for live stream classes
    - information about upcoming events and technology updates
    - reports on strategies and achievements distributed to various stakeholders
- 

**COVID-19**



## Rapid response

- Infrastructure & framework in place
  - Pivoted quickly to move nearly all courses to different modality
  - Training & support structures in place
  - Incremental progress accelerated
  - Expert staff – course designers, technology support
  - Live stream technology – NEW hardware installation; training
  - Websites, videos, workshops, conferences w/ stipends – ACCELERATED
  - Community and networking opportunities among faculty – panels - - ACCELERATED
  - Rapid course redesign approach with faculty oversight – NEW
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# Communication

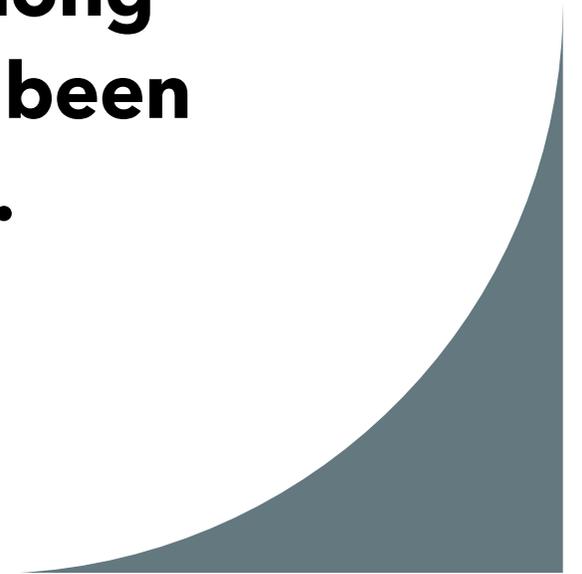
- Regular, timely, informative updates; all levels of the university
  - Guidance - allow flexibility, reach out to students, new remote teaching modalities, room changes, sources of help
  - Data & outcomes
    - Percentage of students enrolled online; number faculty who received live stream training
    - Failure rates - gender, ethnicity, age
    - Student satisfaction survey results - technology, delivery platforms, help needed & sought, behaviors, connectedness
    - Attendance tracked - socially distanced physical classes / remote or recorded sessions
    - Faculty focus groups - modality effectiveness, strategies
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## Key lessons

- Strategic planning critical to identify threats and opportunities
- Range & depth of expertise - enables enactment of vision
- On-going, consistent, transparent communication - in times of crisis and at all times
- On-going opportunities for stakeholder input & assessment of experiences to inform actions
- Use of mentoring & role models - faculty helping faculty
- Culture of collaboration, shared decision making, deep pool of human and physical resources



**While the pandemic accelerated interest, support, and understanding of the need for flexible learning among stakeholders, the foundation had been established prior to its onset.**



## For further information

- Maureen.Andrade@uvu.edu
- Andrade, M. S., & Alden-Rivers, B. (2019). Developing a framework for sustainable growth of flexible learning opportunities. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 4(1), 1-16.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23752696.2018.1564879>

