



OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne June 17th – 20th, 2015

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Submission Template for the 2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title of Proposal:

“Activating” the Nonparticipant Learner in a Large OB Lecture Class: What Works Well with Wikis

2) Abstract:

Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words). If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Connecting and supporting diverse students in productive learning communities is especially hard when teaching large (200+) classes. Even proficient and engaging OB instructors find it difficult to foster and evaluate class participation by *reluctant participants* including second language learners, extreme introverts, performance anxiety sufferers, and the speech- and hearing-disabled. Presented in this session is a project in which large lecture class student volunteers work together, with some instructor involvement, in wiki-facilitated cooperative authoring activities. Session participants will discuss the project’s structure, its results, and the effectiveness of various wiki content and group composition alternatives in light of their own experiences.

3) Keywords:

Use three or four keywords to describe your session.

participation, active learning, wikis

4) Format

- Activity or exercise
- Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
- General discussion session

5) Time Requested:

- 30 Minutes
- 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
- 90 Minutes

6) Planning Details:

Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?

No.

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?

Participants will see how a wiki can supplement the role of more traditional forms of participation, particularly in large classes, where the challenge of engaging categories of “reluctant participants” can be daunting.

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

Research suggests—as do common sense and every strand of our OBTC DNA—that retention and engagement increase in active learning environments (Yoder and Hochevar, 2005, and others). Activities known by the collective term “class participation” are perhaps the oldest and most proven building blocks of active learning communities.

One problem in any size class is that students tend to associate traditional classrooms with their passive roles, largely devoid of interpersonal connection and mutual support. It is also hard to engage more than a few students at a time (O'Connor, 2013). In classes that can number into the hundreds, the process of implementing most forms of class participation—particularly group conversations, voluntary sharing, and a form of in-class torture known as “cold calling”—ranks somewhere on a scale between challenging and horrific. Even when active learning is associated with greater retention and engagement, students find the practice unenjoyable to say the least. Smith and Cardaciotto (2011) liken it to being forced to eat a vegetable considered to be nutritious but unpalatable. [The example the authors employ, broccoli, will not resonate with everyone. Maybe theirs was overcooked.] As difficult and unpleasant and as it can be for teachers *and* students to require participation in a very large class, it can feel hopeless in the case of certain categories of students: individuals with speech and other communication disabilities, extreme introverts, and performance anxiety sufferers.

A number of participation tools presented at recent OBTCs show some degree of success in addressing this “big-class” participation problem. These include student-produced videos, “warm-calling (a form of “cold-calling” in which the student groups know the question a short time in advance), the in-class use of Twitter, and, of course, electronic response systems. Though the information these clicker technologies yield is neither nuanced nor fraud-resistant, the process combines a data-based record of each answer with the in-class anonymity preferred by students and especially prized by reluctant participants (Latham and Hill, 2014).

A solution applied in this instance is the experimental use of a wiki—a number of them, in fact. A “traditional” wiki—an odd choice of terms for such a recent innovation—may be openly accessible and often starts with little or no mandated structure. The wikis in use here are instead available only to assigned groups of volunteers who agree to substitute their contributions for other forms of graded class participation. Using special classroom management system wiki software, every edit is logged and the cumulative result may be assigned a grade.

There is research on a number of successful wiki applications, and several of them in related contexts one point out relevant topics and findings. One of these included a survey measuring the extent to which wiki use “enhance[d] collaborative knowledge building among [graduate] students” (Chang et al., 2010). Another one (Lending, 2010) used a wiki and some instructor involvement to collaborate on a study guide for an information systems course. Another implementation used in an MBA class and applicable in this case only to the most committed and high-achieving volunteers, illustrates how business educators can develop agile, entrepreneurial leaders able to act and communicate effectively in the face of the unknown (Foote, 2013).

The objective here is to adapt some of these methods and objectives to an OB lecture class enrolling just over 200 students. Since the course already employs several participation strategies that work with most students, this project involves only volunteers. The groups assembled are mostly self-identified “reluctants,” though some volunteers represent a broader category of “‘net generation’ students who have different styles and expectations” (Williams and Chinn, 2009).

9) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you’d like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session’s goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.

For the first five minutes or so, we will talk and invite some participant contributions on the difficulties of getting students to coalesce into active learning communities. The presenter’s examples will highlight the special and more extreme challenges present in engaging *reluctant participants* (the speech-disabled, extreme introverts, etc.) in large lecture sections. This “big class” focus has interested growing numbers of OBTCers in recent years, as today’s constrained budget environment is powering the trend toward higher and higher class enrollment capacities.

The next 10-15 minutes will feature an interactive discussion of the two 200-student OB survey course sections in which the experiment takes place. It will include a *very* brief review of the social media and other student engagement tools that were already in place; an analysis of the “contracting,” submission, and evaluation processes being followed in this highly communal social platform; and the results achieved both in learning outcomes and in building connections among the different student groups. We

will also discuss the various effects of different wiki topics and objectives, and of the character of the learning communities created.

The session's closing 10-15 minutes will consist of participants getting answers to any remaining questions, connecting to share stories of their own use of wikis for this and other class purposes, imparting their plans for future use of this tool, and possibly asking about terminology and the desirability of the attributes of different wiki engines: patrolled and flagged revisions, scalability, full and limited access, style sheets, etc.

In the event that the session attracts more than 12-15 participants, about half of this end discussion may take place in small groups.

10) For Activities and Exercises:

Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.

N/A

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:

What is the contribution of your session?

Teachers will get acquainted with the use of wikis in large lectures (which they can also apply in smaller learning communities) to better engage *reluctant participants* in shared learning experiences.

12) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

In many classes, particularly very large ones, contributing ideas to class topics and activities is a key to "learning as a social activity." Making use of this social platform as a tool for engaging underserved groups of *reluctant participants* enables students to connect with one another and the class community as a whole without being forced to rely on speech and other traditional channels of communication.

13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

I *have* presented at OBTC and elsewhere on ways to employ tools ranging from online teams to Twitter and flip teaching in order to engage students by "making the large

class smaller” (aka my “full contact teaching model”). This year’s effort, however, specifically targets groups of students—some second-language learners, extreme introverts, and people with communication disabilities or performance anxiety—who remain the hardest to get to participate in the larger class (and even small group) learning community activities.

This proposal has not been submitted anywhere else.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

Chang, Y., Morales-Arroyo, M. A., Than, H., Tun, Z., & Wang, Z. (2010). Collaborative learning in wikis. *Education For Information*, 28(2-4), 291-303.

Foote, L. M. (2013). Honing Crisis Communication Skills: Using Interactive Media and Student-Centered Learning to Develop Agile Leaders. *Journal Of Management Education*, 37(1), 79-114.

Harris, A., & Rea, A. (2009), "Web 2.0 and Virtual World Technologies: A Growing Impact on IS Education," *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20:2, pp. 137–144.

Latham, A., & Hill, N. S. (2014). Preference for anonymous classroom participation: linking student characteristics and reactions to electronic response systems. *Journal of Management Education*, 38(2), 192-215.

Lending, D. (2010). Using a Wiki to Collaborate on a Study Guide. *Journal Of Information Systems Education*, 21(1), 5-13.

O'Connor, K. J. (2013). Class participation: promoting in-class student engagement. *Education*, 133(3), 340-344.

Smith, C. V., & Cardaciotto, L. (2011). Is active learning like broccoli? Student perceptions of active learning in large lecture classes. *Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. 11, 53-61.

Williams, J., & Chinn, S. J. (2009). Using Web 2.0 to Support the Active Learning Experience. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20(2), 165-174.

Yoder, J. D., & Hochevar, C. M. (2005). Encouraging active learning can improve students' performance on examinations. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32, 91-95.