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Sarah Dove

Welcome back to the latest podcast installment of the Office of Distance Education Instructor Spotlight, a multimedia approach to highlighting instructors actively invested in cutting edge online learning, development and delivery from around the College of Arts and Sciences at the Ohio State University. As a part of Khaled's mission to support dynamic research driven and forward thinking solutions proven to ensure understanding engagement access and equity in online learning communities.

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Sarah Dove

We know that some of the most important work being done toward this purpose is happening in real time in the classroom. My name is Sarah Dove, and I'm an instructional designer for ASC ODE. Joining us for a conversation today is Dr. Elizabeth Kolkovich from the Department of English on OSU's Mansfield Branch campus. Dr. Elizabeth Kolkovich is an associate professor of English at the Ohio State University, where she teaches early British literature at the Mansfield campus.

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Sarah Dove

She is the author of *The Elizabethan Country House Entertainment: Print, Performance, and Gender*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2016, as well as essays on Renaissance drama and women writers. She is currently writing a book about masks in Shakespeare. A central focus of her research is the recovery of women patrons, readers and writers who helped shape English literature, and recent articles on pedagogy have proposed strategies for teaching women writers together with literary form and digital literacy culture, which has received several awards and grants for her teaching and research, including the Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching Fellowships at the Huntington and Folger Library's The Paul W. Brown Excellence in Teaching Award and Mansfield Campus Awards for both

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Sarah Dove

excellence in Teaching and Excellence in Scholarship. Welcome, Elizabeth, and thank you so much for doing this with us today. So the first question I have is, in your estimation, what role does distance education play in the landscape of learning particularly for higher education?

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

I think that distance education is a really important part of higher education these days for two main reasons. The first one is digital literacy, which I think is an incredibly well, not just I think, but I think everyone thinks is an incredibly important skill these days. And

you can incorporate activities that involve digital learning in any kind of class.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

But when you're doing a fully online class, you have a lot of opportunities to make students more comfortable using different kinds of digital platforms and tools, which is the one thing we know about technology is that it's always going to be changing. So I think the more experiences students have with different kinds of programs and platforms, the more confidence they'll build and being able to adapt later.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

Right. So that's one thing. But the second and probably more important reason why I think distance education is important is accessibility. So we at Ohio State are a Land-Grant institution, which means that we are here to provide access to an excellent education for all of Ohio and many of our students come from outside Ohio as well. And in-person classes are fantastic, but sometimes there are barriers to scheduling or attending in-person classes that distance education can address.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

So my students who take online classes, they do so for a lot of different reasons. Some have small children, and it's much easier for them to work around an online schedule. Some have various kinds of disabilities that make it challenging for them to schedule in-person classes. Others maybe work full time or flexible hours so that it's difficult to commit to being in a particular place at a particular time.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And so I love the mix of students that I get in an online class, and I feel like it's a really important kind of modality to offer.

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Sarah Dove

Yeah. The first thing that really jumps to my mind from what you've said is the accessibility piece is not just necessarily about meeting students with disabilities where they are, but it really opens up an umbrella for thinking holistically about students as people and not just students. And I really I so appreciate that.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

Yeah, well, I appreciate that to myself because I have two children and my youngest is two. And I have really appreciated the flexibility

of teaching online. And I know that many of my students have similar life issues that I do. And so absolutely, I think that in the past I've been guilty of this of just thinking about students as students and what they have to offer in my class and what I require of them.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

But the pandemic has taught me that you can't you can't do that. You know, you can't just put people in particular categories based on how you interact with them. It's really important to think about the whole person or you're going to lose a lot of students, you know, and a lot of people are not going to have access to the education that could change their life.

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Sarah Dove

Yeah. 100%. That's fantastic. I feel like we could spend an entire hour just talking about this one piece, even related to the really important thing. Yeah. Yeah, that's great. The next official question I have is how would you describe your impressions of and contact with distance ed for higher education? And where do you see the greatest potential for innovation?

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

I will be honest and say that early in my time at Ohio State, you know, a little over a decade ago, I came to Ohio State and I never expected to teach distance education myself. I teach discussion based early British literature courses, and I could not imagine how that would work in an online or distanced environment. I, I approach my classes as places where we make knowledge rather than just delivering content.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And I thought, well, an online course is excellent for content delivery, but how are we going to create knowledge together in an online space? I just couldn't, I couldn't imagine how I could replicate an in-person discussion online. So then I actually became really interested in online teaching right before the pandemic, when Ohio State adopted the digital flagship initiative.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And I decided to take a course for instructors on how to use iPads and embed them in classes And that really changed my thinking. I then offered a course that required students to have iPads, and we did a lot of activities together on the iPads in class. And I started to think, well, we don't actually have to be here to do these things.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And I saw how the students enjoyed interacting with one another in a written online space. And it was a writing class anyway. So I thought, well, this makes a lot of sense. And I was just thinking, like, maybe I'll offer this as some kind of hybrid course in the future. And that was in February. 20, 20. And so then the following month, I had to move everything online.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And then, as we all did, we jumped headfirst into different kinds of distance learning. And it turned out that it works quite well for several of my classes. And the mistake that I had made in my thinking was that word replicate. I used like I thought that I that I needed to somehow transfer exactly what I'd been doing in the in-person class to an online environment.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And I don't think that's the right way to go about it at all. Instead, I went back to what is it that I want my students to learn and what what can my students learn? What opportunities do I have in this different kind of environment? So that's all to say that I had a very different impression of distance education a decade ago than I have now.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And now I think that distance learning is an important component of higher education. I think that in-person learning is also an important component. So my ideal learning environment in my ideal institutional environment is to have a variety of modalities. I would say that what I would I would like to see above all is for us not to just return to the way we were all doing things in 20, 18, but to figure out how the pandemic has made us better teachers because it has, because we had to, and then take those lessons and incorporate them in the best of the pandemic.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

Taken for a Non-pandemic time.

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Sarah Dove

There's already so much wisdom in here and I like I do I want to say like open it up for one more vital piece of advice because I know that I know that it exists and I'm sure that you're locked and loaded with it. But I guess if there is one vital piece of advice I think that there's, there's still space to give that kind of advice.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

Well, I am a rule follower, except when someone tells me to choose one. So I'm going to give you to go. First, online teaching takes an enormous amount of time. We all know this, but I think it's worth saying because if you're taking a lot of time, it doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. Also, I found that I have to give myself honestly about twice as much time as I expect to do different tasks, at least the first time I teach an online course.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And the thing about online teaching, especially when you design asynchronous courses, is that you can reuse materials. And if you prepare the course originally with the idea that you're going to teach it again in the future, you might teach components again in the future. You can just make sure that if you record videos, you record them in a way that you can use them later and you can put a lot of labor in upfront, but then it will eventually pay dividends because as I've taught courses multiple times, it is so much easier, I mean much more easier the second time than in the past when I taught in-person classes because I don't have to do

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

everything again. So it takes a lot of time, but if you're willing to put in time upfront, it will pay you back. Also, the one thing that I would tell instructors who want to teach online for the first time or who want to get better at online teaching is to try to put yourself in the position of a student.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And I mean that literally try to take an online course yourself. Then if you're not able to do that, you could take a single workshop or seminar and just experience what it's like as a student. And if you're not able to do that, I would say at least try to approach your course like a student sometimes. Candace has a fantastic student view where you can see things from the student's perspective and try to do that as much as you can, especially because I'm always finding things that I had no idea.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

And even then students tell me things I just didn't realize they would see a certain way. But if you can try to think of what it would be like to be a student that can help you a whole lot, especially if, like me, you've never actually taken an online course as a student because you went to school before such things would come in.

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Elizabeth Kolkovich

So that that's the one thing I would say try to try to think about things from a student's perspective, the best you can, try to try to be a student yourself, and that I think it'll make you a better designer.

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Sarah Dove

Of courses We want to express our gratitude to Dr. Elizabeth Cole College for participating in our Instructor Spotlight series. Dr. Cole Kovic was also featured as a panelist in our Teaching Forum event, Asynchronous versus Synchronous Courses. More information about this event as well as a recording can be found on our website, AC DC Dot OSU Dot Edu. Thank you to all those listening for joining us for this installment

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Sarah Dove

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