

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 4 Episode 3

ChicoFlex, Hyflex...It's all Complex

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Welcome to the Rise, Teach, Learn podcast. I am Dr. Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State. And we are happy to make these resources available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Gunderson. And she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience. Subscribe to our podcast and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

00:35

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach, Learn. I'm your host Jamie Gunderson. In this episode entitled Chicoflex, Hyflex, it's all Complex, we will explore a couple of different modes of instruction available at Chico State. I'd like to start by welcoming this episode's guests. With me today are Kathy Fernandes, our Academic Technology Officer, Dr. Katie Mercurio, Assistant Professor in the marketing department and a Chicoflex assessment fellow. And Tina Hanson-Lewis, a lecturer in chemistry and biochemistry and a Chicoflex assessment fellow. Kathy, can you start us off by giving us a definition and a little history on the evolution of Chicoflex at Chico State? Sure, let me start by saying that, remember when we were in the middle of the pandemic? And, of course, we know in March 2020, you know, we shut things down for a little while. But the idea that we were going to need to be more sustainable in the future to be able to deliver education, this just wasn't happening at Chico State it was happening across all of higher education. And that, is how do we make it such that a faculty member could go into a classroom (and at that time, we were thinking even without students) and literally be, you might say, broadcasting across the internet their courses? So, the concept started with how do we take classrooms, and add the microphones and the cameras so that faculty could go into their classrooms and deliver their lessons again, for resiliency. Of course, that model continued to be added to and the essence becoming, well, if you have a classroom that has all of that, then when students can come in back into the room, whether socially distanced or not, you could have students that were on Zoom and students that were in the classroom at the same time. So, we called that model Chicoflex, basically, students being online faculty being seen on a camera, being able to speak to both audiences, those that are in front of them face to face, as well as those of us in Zoom. And at the same time, students in Zoom being able to talk and the students in the classroom being able to hear them.

02:45

As you're talking, I'm reflecting on my experience as a faculty and I'm thinking about, you know, I was on campus providing instruction using the Chicoflex technology. And most of my students were engaging online, just a handful of, of students face to face. And now it's switched, I have a big audience of face-to-face students, and just a handful of online students, but regardless of who is where everybody gets to engage in class, and so it's been a really kind of fun model that has evolved. So obviously, a lot of research, money, time, effort, support, resources has gone into implementing Chico

flex on campus. But one of the things I think is really neat is we're actually doing research to learn more about how we can implement it in a way that really works for faculty and students. So, I invited Katie and Tina on to this episode to speak a little bit about that research. And so, Katie, I wanted to start with you. And I understand that you're more over the quantitative data collection. So, I was hoping you could share highlights of faculty trends.

In the spring term of 2022, we designed a quantitative study that took quite a long time. So, I want to really thank all of the faculty at Chico State who participated in the survey. It was conducted in weeks 11 through 15 of the spring term, and we had 193 responses from faculty at Chico State. However, what we're talking about here today is specifically about the flex modality that was done and only 32 of the people that we collected out of that 193 were using that flex modality in the spring of 2022. And this is where we have some really interesting data, we found that of those people who used that flex modality in the spring of 2022 75% rated their spring 2022 experience as good or extremely good. And I think that that's really interesting because we wanted to try and assess how people were interacting with this technology scene whether they had bad experiences with the students in terms of pedagogy, or they had hard experiences with the technology. And by and large, most of our faculty respondents had a positive experience with Flex.

05:16

We also gathered some other data that I think is interesting that relates to how comfortable faculty on our campus feel about teaching in different types of modalities of learning. And so, when we ask them about teaching in person, 96% of our faculty feel somewhat or very comfortable teaching in person. And then when we ask them about things like teaching an online synchronous modality 73%, feels somewhat or very comfortable teaching in that modality. And that makes a lot of sense, because many of us when we did that pivot during COVID, had to go and start teaching in this online synchronous format. Also, with a very high number 64% feel somewhat or very comfortable teaching online, asynchronous, and again, that was an option that many of our faculty chose at Chico State when COVID happened, and we had to do that pivot. However, in spring of 2022, when we asked all of the faculty on campus, not just those who had taught in flex, but everyone, only 33% felt somewhat or very comfortable with teaching in the flex modality, the majority of the respondents actually did not feel very comfortable with that modality of learning.

06:35

Kind of want to pivot to Tina, who collected a lot of qualitative data. And I want to maybe explore why we're seeing some of those trends. Tina, I understand that you met with some of the faculty who were participating in the ChicoFlex mode of instruction.

Yes, so we reached out to everybody, all of the faculty in Spring 2022 that were on the schedule as teaching in the Chicoflex modality, and asked them if they'd be willing to sit down with me for an interview just to talk about how that mode of instruction was going. And 20 people responded back offering their time for the interview. So, then Katie, and I sat down and chose 10 of the faculty because of time constraints to interview based on trying to get a wide range of colleges and departments experiences as a teacher, tenure track versus lecturer, and then class size, class demographics like undergraduate, upper division, lower division, versus graduate, all those kinds of things were taken into

consideration when we chose the 10 faculty members to interview so that we got a wide range of experiences. And so, when we interviewed those faculty members, we asked them questions about their experience of why they chose to do a ChicoFlex mode of instruction, what they had to do to change their course to fit into the new mode of instruction. And then what their pros and cons were, you know, in that in that modality.

08:13

And some interesting themes came out of that data analysis, where we noticed that it really seems like this is a new teaching mode for many of these faculty. And because of that, they're not as comfortable in teaching in this format, as they would be to teach fully in person, which many of them had been doing for years, if not, you know, close to a decade or more. And so, we all kind of experienced this when we switched to online, and none of us felt very prepared, or at least most of us that have never taught online before, didn't feel very prepared to teach online. And that was a lot of the themes that I was seeing in these interview analyses too is that people, faculty just didn't feel as prepared to teach this and as fluent in teaching it as we are in person.

Course: it did depend a little bit on a couple of scenarios for the class, freshman level courses, struggled more the faculty in the courses struggled more and I think the age of the students and experience level of the students had a play in that. But then smaller courses where you expect more one on one, student to student interaction and student to teacher interaction can be a challenge in in the ChicoFlex mode of instruction, when we're not as as the instructor of the course not very well versed in how to set up those expectations and how to make those things flow in easily and seamlessly like we are, you know, when we walk into an in person classroom, we know what we're doing. We do it, you know, we don't know what we're doing and it shows in their responses. But some of the faculty that were more comfortable with technology and online modes of instruction, adapted much quicker and easier and intended to enjoy way, that that mode of instruction and felt like they would stick with it. So it really seems to come down to experience levels of, of the faculty with the modes of instruction they've taught in the past, the expectations for the course, and the interaction levels that you would expect in that course. And then also the comfort with technology and the training and lead time that the faculty had to really prepare for being able to teach in that mode of instruction.

10:28

I think the mix of quantitative and qualitative assessment really captures the faculty experience. Katie, I want to throw it back to you. One of the things I was noticing, and one of the things we kind of talked about a little bit was that it was interesting that 73% of the faculty felt very comfortable teaching online, synchronously. And 96% of the faculty felt very comfortable teaching in person. But when you combine those two together, only 33% of the faculty felt comfortable teaching in Flex, which, like I said, is a combination of those methods. Can you speak a little bit more to some of the data that you found that might explain that difference?

Absolutely. We looked at some things about people's training and the training that they had completed with Kathy and the TLP team. And specifically of those 193 responses, we found that only 58 of the people had completed the training with Kathy to teach the flex modality. And it wasn't just Kathy but it was a great, wonderful group of people. And it was done in the Summer of 2022. But what we found,

and this is where it's the most interesting is that if instructors did not participate in goflex training, it was significantly correlated with instructors who had a bad or extremely bad experience. We also found really interesting differences of those flex instructors about the type of flex modality that they liked the most. Because we had a variety of options of what flex could look like, it could be something where the students were scheduled to come on one day a week and scheduled to be online on another day of a week, or that they were required to come on certain times or days. But what we found to be the most popular form of flex, among 40% of the people who taught flex in the spring of 2022, is when the students chose when to attend online, and when they chose to attend in person. And so, we're seeing differences in people's experience depending on how they executed flex. We see differences in how they sort of went through, or experienced or thought of flex when they had different training The training with Kathy and TLP. And we also found the differences in terms of pedagogy and the types of methods they used to teach in their flex classrooms.

13:06

This makes a lot of sense to me as a faculty who taught in the Chico Flex mode of instruction, and I still teach in the Chico Flex mode of instruction. I'm not sure where I would be without that training and that kind of deep dive with the technology, because I felt like at least when I walked into that mode of instruction, for the first time, I had practice a little and the you know, once I was proficient with the technology, my focus could shift on my pedagogy and how to implement my lessons and activities and assessments in ways that, regardless of how students wanted to attend my classroom, they could they could engage,

I'd like to add to that, Jamie, I think that, you know, the technology, of course, is set up and it's again, the first time that Chico State is doing Chicoflex. So we made the best decisions we could on the technology that was available. And that continues to evolve. And it is cognitive overload to walk in and try to figure out how you're supposed to drive. Like giving a 16 year-old bunch of keys and saying well, I just gave you an hour of how to push on the gas pedal and how to make the steering wheel work, but but now the 16 year old has not had the experience to actually drive. And it's true of Chico flex I think it's important that it's not just an hour in the classroom, but it's getting in you worked with colleagues during goflex In the summer of 2021. Colleagues discuss with each other played roles as being the student and the teacher. And then you really got to get familiar where you didn't have to keep thinking now where's that button? Or where do I cause this to happen? In other words, it becomes a little more second nature like oh, I want to do this now. So I know this is what I do, which then allows you to pay attention to the students and your lesson in what you're trying to get across. It's difficult to do all those things. If you haven't had the training.

15:00

I want to pivot to hyflex. And I want to be very clear about the difference between hyflex modes of instruction and Chicoflex modes of instruction. So Kathy, can you help define those two terms?

Yeah, and hyflex essentially involves students being able to pick and choose, regardless of the week, whether they attend face to face in class, attend asynchronously online via Zoom in the Chicoflex model, and or could choose to take the course fully online. Now I've heard many faculty say, Oh, I teach high flex, because what I do is I go into the classroom and there are students online and their

students in the class and I record my lecture or record the session. And then those students who want to can see the the recording later. We don't really call that hyflex, because you're not necessarily going into the LMS and creating an activity for those students who want to take the course fully online. Instead, just watch this lecture for an hour or this course session for an hour, which really isn't highly engaging. So hyflex is really about, I think it's better to think about it as designing it as a fully online course and then teaching it also in person whether students are synchronous, watching via Zoom or face to face and further enhancing, endorsing, supplementing what has already been put online. That allows students regardless of their mode to connect with each other and engage in all the activities that are needed in order to get through. So hyflex has, we actually have a course that at the Chancellor's Office has been developed to understand those hyflex modes and broken down into how to best design a hyflex course. We've had four high flex fellows in spring of 2020 to take the Chancellor's Office course and then develop at least four modules in a hyFlex mode of giving their students opportunities to pick and choose. And we do have those reports and we want to blend some of the results of those reports from the hyflex fellows at Chico State with what Katie and Tina are discovering for Chicoflex. And again continue to for Chico State, regarding our future, have these different flex modes again for the sake of students who are looking for more flexibility to in order to get through their education.

17:35

And there you have it, folks. Today we explored Chicoflex and hyflex modes of instruction and we learned that it's all complex. I'd like to thank Kathy Fernandes, Katie Mercurio and Tina Hanson-Lewis for their contributions to this episode and their work in making sure ChicoFlex is available on campus. Please don't forget that you can access previous episodes of Rise Teach Learn as well as all of the resources associated with this and other episodes through our FDEV podcast web page. A big thank you to you for listening and until next time, we got this Wildcats.

18:11

We would like to thank the Mechoopda on whose traditional lands this recording is taking place. Without their support and continued positive presence in our community, we would be unable to afford the cultural and educational work that is at the heart of this recording.