


[Home](#) » [Episodes](#) » HyFlex Course Design Model with Brian Beatty

## HyFlex Course Design Model with Brian Beatty



**Think UDL**  
Download Free Podcast App

Download on the **App Store** GET IT ON **Google play**

✕

Welcome to Episode 37 of the ThinkUDL podcast. Today's episode is part of a Summer 2020 series on UDL in online environments. I have the opportunity to speak with the creator of the Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) Course Design model, Brian Beatty, who is an Associate Professor of Instructional Technologies in the Department of Equity, Leadership Studies and Instructional Technologies at San Francisco State University. Brian's primary areas of interest and research include social interaction in online learning, flipped classroom implementation, and developing instructional design theory for Hybrid-Flexible learning environments.

At SFSU, Dr. Beatty pioneered the development and evaluation of the HyFlex course design model for blended learning environments, implementing a "student-directed-hybrid" approach to better support student learning. In today's episode, Brian and I will discuss the values and principles of the HyFlex course design model, along with its history and implementation in several contexts. Is the HyFlex

model, along with its history and implementation in several contexts. Is the HyFlex

model right for you? Brian will help us process the questions one needs to answer in order to determine if this is the right model for you and provide you with the resources to get started. All of the resources that Brian and Lillian mention today can be found on Episode 37 of the ThinkUDL.org web page. Thank you for joining the conversation on the ThinkUDL podcast!

## Resources

[Hybrid-Flexible Course Design: Implementing student-directed hybrid classes](#) This open access book by Dr. Brian Beatty gives an overview of the Hybrid-Flexible design model as well as implementation strategies.

[Values and Principles of Hybrid-Flexible Course Design](#) Here Dr. Brian Beatty outlines the four main principles of Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) course design (Learner Choice, Equivalency, Reusability, Accessibility) that are the core of the HyFlex model.

[The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs](#) (Bonk & Graham) This is a great resource for planning a blended learning course that Dr. Brian Beatty suggests as you start thinking of your own HyFlex model.

[Quality Matters](#) Dr. Beatty mentions QM as one of the standards for online course instruction. QM offers faculty development and all sorts of courses to help you move into online course design.

[CSU Quality Assurance for Blended and Online Courses](#) CSU provides open access to the Quality Learning and Teaching rubric for online and hybrid quality peer review and certification

Dr. Beatty suggests starting with one of these blended learning toolkits as you move into a blended or HyFlex model of teaching.

[University of Central Florida Blended Learning Toolkit](#)

[University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Blended Learning Toolkit](#)

[Hybrid-Flexible Bibliography](#) Find articles and books here that support the HyFlex model

model.

# Transcript

Lillian (00:00):

Welcome to think UDL, the universal design for learning podcast where we hear from the people who are designing and implementing strategies with learner variability in mind. I'm your host, Lillian Nave, and I'm interested in not just what you're teaching, learning, guiding, and facilitating, but how you design and implement it and why it even matters.

Lillian (00:39):

Welcome to episode 37 of the think UDL podcast. Today's episode is part of a summer 2020 series on UDL in online environments. I have the opportunity to speak with the creator of the Hybrid-Flexible or Hy-Flex course design model. Brian Beatty, who is an associate professor of instructional technologies in the department of Equity, Leadership Studies and Instructional Technologies at San Francisco State University. Brian's primary areas of interest and research include social interaction in online learning, flipped classroom implementation, and developing instructional design theory for hybrid-flexible learning environments. At San Francisco State University, Dr. Beatty pioneered the development and evaluation of the Hy-Flex course design model for blended learning environments, implementing a student directed hybrid approach to better support student learning. In today's episode, Brian and I will discuss the values and principles of the Hy-Flex course design model along with its history and implementation in several contexts.

Lillian (01:54):

Is the Hy-Flex model right for you? Brian will help us process the questions one needs to answer in order to determine if this is the right model for you and provide you with the resources to get started. All of the resources that Brian and I mention today can be found on episode 37 of the thinkudl.org webpage. Thank you for joining the conversation on the Think UDL podcast today. I want to thank Brian Beatty for joining me on the Think UDL podcast to talk about hybrid flexible or high flex course design. And thank you, Brian, for joining us on Think UDL.

or high flex course design. And thank you Brian for joining us on Think UDL.

Brian (02:37):

Oh, you're very welcome.

Lillian (02:39):

And the first question that I ask all of my guests is what makes you a different kind of learner?

Brian (02:47):

Well, I think that I've noticed my learning preferences and the way I access information has changed over time depending a lot on the situation, but also kind of the of a life I've been in most recently I've been doing a lot of commuting except for the last two months of course. I find myself doing a lot more on just listening to podcasts or books or things like that without having to have it in front of me. It really became one of my primary modes of getting information, especially information that was more, you know, that I wasn't trying to learn to pass a class or something like that. Typically I'm an academic and so I work in words, and so I do a lot of written communication, either writing or reading.

Brian (03:31):

So that's always been one of my primary modes. But even, even these days I'm often thinking of how I can get this read to me instead of just reading it. And so that's been a big difference. I've also noticed that I've become more of a video based learner. When I need to learn how to do something, then I need someone to show me how to do it. So for me, YouTube has saved me thousands of dollars over the years in repairs for my car and for my house and other kinds of things because I have that readily available now to me. So much easier to see someone do it than just to read the instructions. Although the instructions on it are nice to have when you need that detail, you just can't get from a video.

Lillian (04:06):

Absolutely. I must echo that because I remember about 15 years ago getting something that I needed to put together before I had the chance to look at something on YouTube. And I remember it being one piece of paper with about

over 100 directions that showed screws going into the next screw that goes into the bolt. I think it was a piece of furniture for one of my young children and I thought, how can I? This is so overwhelming. There's no way I'm going to figure out how to do it. And it's one of those frustrating, I think it was like putting it together for a holiday or Christmas or something late at night and now I'm using YouTube all the time, need to replace my weed whacker. Got it! Done it! Youtube, all of those things.

Brian (04:50):

Yeah. So for me, you know what I take away from that, especially when I'm preparing classes for my students, is finding multiple ways to present the information. So if I'm doing a presentation in class or students are, I always try to find a way to record that. Whether or not we're doing HyFlex or not, but because I know it's going to help some of them after the fact, go back and review that or, and learn differently and better from it in, in some cases.

Lillian (05:13):

Absolutely. And that flexibility in being able to press pause and say, did I do this part right? Or going backwards, I find I am doing that all the time now. And as I'm designing my course for the fall, which will be online, I need to be creating these ways for students to be flexible in their learning. So I'm learning a lot now about how I think we're all able to learn with technology. It's, it's so much easier now to learn some things.

Brian (05:43): Right. Agreed

Lillian (05:44): So let's start out with can you tell me what hybrid flexible, also called high flex model is and the, the values that you bring to that, or what are the values of a HyFlex model?

Brian: Sure. Yeah. Hyflex came from a need in the department I'm in, or was in at San Francisco state in the graduate college of education. We felt the need for serving students who were not able to come to class all the time. We're a regional campus almost primarily face-to-face instruction, lots of online courses, but no fully online programs. And so we had a need to support our enrollments. And so

our department chair came into a meeting and said, "I think that we should create an online program." And basically shift our face to face program to fully online. And the challenge for us was none of us had ever taught a fully online course in the program in particular. Our students were not, they signed up for a residential program and they, they seem to like coming to classes.

Brian (06:50): And so it didn't seem like just flipping the switch to online wasn't going to work for us. Plus there were really no resources to, you know, to help us to build an online program, you know, in a term or two. So I suggested that we come up with a different approach and let me try this to see if I could change my face to face class to accommodate online students as well and not just accommodate them but also to serve them well. And so I had a term to try this out in one class. It worked well. And so then the next year I did it in all of my classes and, and I needed to have a term to use. And it's not just a hybrid course cause I knew hybrid courses had kind of proven their, you know, their efficacy across, you know, a lot, lots of different situations.

Brian (07:28):

But I also knew that that was under the control of the faculty. And what we wanted to do was to put the student in control of their coming to class or not with the assumption that in our program all the students could come to class because the regionally located and yet many of them found that they had other things going on that prevented them from being there and it prevented them from enrolling in programs like ours. So I needed another term besides just high flex or hybrid. So I added flexible to it. I thought, well, I need a little, you know, I want a term that can kind of like feel like a brand name without really being trademarked or brand named or anything like that. But a HyFlex became it just a little, a portmanteau of hybrid and flexible and high flex was something.

Brian (08:09):

And that was something that people could remember. Within a year or two, we decided on campus to create a formal definition of the term. We were doing an online education policy and defining the kinds of courses, you know, traditional and technology enhanced and hybrid and online. And we decided to add high flex

to that so that when other faculty wanted to do this or we had conversation around it, around it with administrators or students if we set HyFlex, we could point to this definition, say, this is what we mean. We mean a fully face to face component. We mean, we mean a fully online opportunity for students to take and the ability to change between those modes based on the students' needs. At a particular point as we were launching this, I realized that we needed to have more than a definition.

Brian (08:55):

And so we created, we came up with these four fundamental values and they're values around alternatives. In other words, we needed to have legitimate alternatives one online, one face to face, sometimes two different ones online. You know, synchronous and asynchronous and yet there had to be at least those two main alternatives and those alternatives have to come lead to equivalent learning outcomes. And so the idea of equivalent learning outcomes or equivalency is another important principle for us or value for us. That kind of turns into principles and goals. And that doesn't mean equal, right? The experience in an online class is often very different than in a face to face class. Even if the contents the same, maybe the activities even the same, there's a discussion component and yet an online discussion can be very different in nature than a face to face discussion.

Brian (09:43):

Yet they can lead to equivalent learning outcomes for the students. So those were two important ones. Another one that was important for us, especially around managing workload was the idea of reuse. And so when we talk about reuse, we're saying what we're creating for a face to face class should be, those should be also resources that we can use in the online version of the course and vice versa. So if we're creating interaction activities for our online students, the things that generate the artifacts, that discussion, both posts and things like that should also be learning resources for face to face students. And so nothing is ever really built just for a single set of students. If we can in any way, you know, kind of capture it and present it to the other types of students.

Brian (10:26):

So, we can kind of keep them together and we don't have to do things twice. Typically, you know, so you're delivering a presentation in class. If you have a way of, if you're digitizing those digital materials can certainly become available for online students synchronous or asynchronous as well as recordings of things that are going on, et cetera. And the fourth principle is that of accessibility. We've always, at San Francisco state, we've been kind of known in the world of accessibility as kind of being people who kind of push the envelope on that. We want to be able to meet our students where they are, not necessarily by accommodating them when they, you know, when they, when they tell us that there's an issue and they have a formal accommodation, but also by design, we'd rather design for a range of accessibility challenges from the front end so that we don't have to make them feel like they're being accommodated when they come to us with with a need that they're exposing to us.

Brian (11:21):

So accessibility has always been an important thing, but in the world of HyFlex, so in the world of HyFlex building an online course, that's clearly very important. Accessible documents, accessible media, but it's not just access to the content, the information, but it's also access to the experience. And so one of the challenges even in an urban environment like San Francisco is that not all our students have access to networks on a convenient basis. They didn't always have access to computers to use outside of a classroom environment. So if they didn't have access to those things, they really couldn't. They really didn't have the option for flexibility because you know, for them, being an online student would be extremely difficult. And so what we need are ways to support those kinds of students or students in those situations to have that legitimate choice.

Brian (12:08):

Libraries, school libraries, public libraries, you know, provide a great thing or, you know, citywide wifi. Those are all those things kind of help. And this is not something we have a lot of direct control over. And it's not something that is, it's less under the control of the faculty member. You can't really design all that well for it, but you can take into account, you know using lower bandwidth, you know, kind of recordings or other kinds of things so that it's not so challenging for some



students, you know, who are kind of in a digital, you know, there's a gap somewhere that they're not able to close. So that's the, those are the four fundamental principles. And so we've been able to incorporate those in our designs and we meet them pretty well most of the time, although clearly, based on the classes and the specific situations or there are always opportunities to improve what we're doing.

Lillian (12:57):

Okay. So these values seem to be very learner-centered and also need to be thought about before you even have your first day of class. Like all of this is design centric, right? Learner choice. So you're giving your, your learners choices, whether they're in class, synchronous or asynchronous, that equivalency so that whatever they choose, they don't feel like this is less than, right. That if I'm not showing up in class, then I'm getting half of a class or something like that. Does that, does that sound right?

Brian (13:32):

Yeah, I'd say that's, that's what we're, that's what, that's what our goal is.

Lillian (13:36):

And that reusability is, I think, helpful for our instructors. Right? So they don't have to make three different plans for every class session, but it also helps the students in thinking, well, if I were in class, I would've gotten this lesson and if I'm out of class, I get this other lesson, that again, that feeling of being less than if they choose one way or the other.

Brian (13:56):

Right. And it also creates usually multiple opportunities to access the same information.

Lillian (14:05):

Great. Oh, that's just like we were talking about before in YouTube videos and having that choice and flexibility and then that accessibility part is, is super important. Not just accommodation but designing from the beginning for students

to get at all of that information any way they can, whether it's a podcast, low bandwidth, high bandwidth, a video, something like that. This is a lot of forethought and boy, we are very thankful for your heavy lifting and coming up with all of this forethought for others to put into place.

Brian (14:39):

Yeah. The you know, this, this takes a, typically we talk about this from a design first approach because in, in normal times, this is, this is often a choice that faculty are making or perhaps departments or programs are making to move in this direction. And, and they usually have the time to do the development work to get this started. Right now we're in a situation where that time is not as, as readily available and may not be available for many. And so we have to look at you know, almost like designing as we go. Like, what can we do? What is, what is going to be good enough to get started? And then how can we adapt as we move along to better incorporate the values, the principles and whatever local values and principles, you know become, you know, important to incorporate as well.

Lillian (15:27):

Yeah. And that's what a lot of folks have to be doing now is design on the fly. But you're giving us a lot of really good things to be thinking about as we're designing these things on the fly. So you've answered a lot of my interest in like how the high flex came about. And sort of what it's morphed into. So could you give me and our listeners an example of what maybe one module or one course day might look like, where you are incorporating what the learner choice in equivalency and reusability, what that might look like? For a class?

Brian (16:08):

Sure. I'll take a class. I teach a lot of graduate seminar courses, but a lot of a lot of, a lot of undergraduate courses follow a similar model where it's it's basically, you know, content presentation would interact with discussion, perhaps some small group work, you know, that that are the primary you know, the primary conduct in the classroom. It would be in most of our high flux instructors start from a face to face course and existing in face to face course. Some may, it could because in general it doesn't make a lot of sense to take a fully online course and to create an

online or face to face version of it. There's typically less need for that than there is for the other direction. So we have content laid out. There are activities that are typically have been kind of proven in the classroom by the instructor over time.

Brian (16:53):

And that's what they're starting with. And so then we're looking for ways to, you know, add in components that will serve face to face students. So for us in one of these courses, one of the first things we started doing was recording what's going on, what goes on in the classroom. Even at a simple audio recording when we started, we didn't really have the capability, this was 15 years ago to do a video well in the classroom, especially when they had one faculty member managing or for themselves. So we just use a little DVR, a little digital voice recorder and created the MP3 file which was not, not very large and it could be easily uploaded to the LMS. And so after class I would typically have the recording from the class and post that to, to that for students who couldn't be there.

Brian (17:36):

All the digital materials were also posted to the class. And so if there was a presentation that was being done those files were available not only for using the classroom but also in the LMS. And the other component that we had a, we started, we started with just asynchronous asynchronous students in mind for the online component. It wasn't easy for us to do synchronous connections at the time. And so we needed to do, we needed to support asynchronous students. So we had, we had the digital presentation files, we have a recording of the classroom, the interactive classroom discussion with the student voices in there and all the, you know, kind of sidetracked conversations that you might get into. But then we added in the asynchronous discussion forum for the, primarily for the online students who were going to be doing it later.

Brian (18:20):

And that was a typical topical discussion, you know, to do the readings and, you know, look at the other resources. Here's, here's a recording from class if you'd like to listen to it and then have that conversation with other online students. After doing that for a term or so. It became very clear that we needed to build in more

interaction among students across both modes. And so the way we've ended up now is when we have a typical class, we'll still do the digital materials, we'll still record what's going on in the class. We're typically using video recordings now we'll often use zoom or another tool like that to kind of capture what's going on in the classroom. Our audio solutions are better for the classroom, so we might use table mikes or some other way of capturing the student voices so that they can be heard in the synchronous online session as well as the live online session.

Brian (19:08):

But we create that recording. So that's an important component. When we have a small group activities in the classroom, oftentimes we'll have synchrony. If we have synchronous students, we'll, we'll put them into small groups with one or more of the in class students, in class students with all what their devices are. Often I encourage them to engage in the online platform as well. So they're part of the chat that they can kind of help manage that part of the classroom. So they're, they're involved in the same activities. In some cases we might do a group that's all online students depending upon the situation. So we have that component and then there's, I still want to support our asynchronous students with the opportunity to be part of discussions, but I don't want them to be left out. They're all by themselves in a, you know, in a class of 20 or 25 students, you know, if students typically like coming to class and they find value in that, you might have most of your students in class.

Brian (19:58):

I always typically did. So that means there's a relatively few number of asynchronous students. So for four or five students trying to post in an online discussion forum, throw it away as pretty sparse. So what I, what I, what I've changed is that when we're doing in class discussions, especially small group breakouts, what we'll do is we'll create summaries of what we've talked about in a little paragraph, summaries or diagrams or images, et cetera. And we'll post that to the online forum to kind of pre-populate that forums. So the online asynchronous online students coming in later, you don't come into nothing being there, right? There's already an inning, you know, some form of discussion that they can engage with. I've also created discussion forums that all students have to do, whether or

not they're in class or not. I've always done this idea of a reflection forum and so students get to talk about how they're learning in class, the process, maybe challenges that they're coming.

Brian (20:49):

And I have them do that in, in their own thread and replied to their own thread every week. So over 12 weeks they've got 12 posts, kind of their learning progress through the class. Well, I found that reflection for them. I don't require them to interact with anybody in that they all see all the posts and I find after a week or two, they start interacting on their own. And so for me, that's a way of supporting the learning community among all the kinds of learners in the class. So that would be something that where I choose an online activity that everybody gets to be part of rather than just having this kind of group that feels like they're just kind of outside looking in. The other thing we do is that for our assessments, the assessments in the classes I teach are always, are the same for all the students I use, I'll use a lot of projects and writing kinds of assigned assignments many fewer tests. You know, quizzes are more for a learning kind of check along the way rather than a high stakes test environment. So that remains the same for all students.

Lillian (21:45):

And what sort of prep did the students do ahead of time? Is this anything that's specific for HyFlex or you just have your usual, maybe you've got videos, you've got all your kind of low bandwidth, high bandwidth, or tell me about the prep that they have before they come into that time.

Brian (22:04):

Right? Yeah. Typically the students have assigned, you know, content to access ahead of time. It could be part, it could be a chapter or two from a textbook. It could be articles to read, it could be videos to watch. I actually, I try to create a mix of, you know, kind of in my classes, I try for kind of an academic writing, maybe a more professional or not, not academic writing, write more practitioner language writing and then, and then some sort of a video. You know, that may be adding a different approach to whatever concept it might be. And so they have those kinds of things that I asked them to do before they come into class. And many times

they do, sometimes, sometimes they don't. And I think one of the reasons that I've been students have told me this is one of the reasons they sometimes choose not to come to class live is because they don't feel well prepared and they want, they need more time before they feel like they can, you know you know, contribute meaningfully to a conversation, which means they may be choosing to be an asynchronous student because they know that they're not ready for that, that live experience like on Monday at four o'clock or whatever it happens to be, which is, which is which is nice.

Brian (23:12):

I mean, in the past they would just show up for class because they knew they had to be at class and they wouldn't be ready. Now they have the opportunity to find the time. Right. you know, sometime during that week to get ready and then to be an active participation in the discussion.

Lillian (23:27):

Yeah. And much, it seems like much like when we watch a YouTube video to try to figure out how to do something, if they're watching a recording, they can and they don't understand something, then they can look through notes or they can go to the reading and, and kind of try to dig deeper and then kind of press pause, press play again and move forward. So it allows for that integration and, and maybe some reflection which you just can't have if you're alive in the class. Right,

Brian (23:55):

Right. It's easy to miss things. I mean, even sitting in a meeting on zoom you know we don't record most of our meetings I've, I've experienced. And there are times where, you know, someone was saying something important. For some reason I'm not, I'm not, I don't know. I'm paying it, not paying attention. I'm just missing what they're saying. And we almost never have the opportunity to go back and say, could you just rewind that five minutes? Wouldn't that be great? Yeah. Wouldn't that be great? All right. Our meetings would be a lot longer.

Lillian (24:19):

Yes, they would. All right. So this is a lot of choice that we're giving our students and you know, we are in a slightly different time now where maybe students don't necessarily have the choice, the choice is being made for them. Is there anything that you see that's different now to be thinking about employing a high flex model in maybe the strictures of a post or maybe we're not post-COVID19, we're during COVID19. So what are some of your thoughts about employing a HyFlex model in in this day in time?

Brian (24:58):

Yeah, there are certainly some major differences I would envision and in particular around the requirements that we would expect to around physical distancing. As well as you know, students who have to be out of class for whatever reason, or students who don't want to be in class because of health concerns. And, and the whole idea of building an instructional or continuity capacity as well. So as far as physical distancing, what high flux allows is for you to have a, you know, like a, like a hybrid approach. Would be where you can limit the number of students in a classroom and you could split them up and do, you know you know, A's and B, you know, A's are here on Tuesday, B's are here in Thursday or vice versa, things like that. So that's one way of going about that.

Brian (25:40):

And the, the value of having a HyFlex approach is that you may have students who have real legitimate needs to be there for face to face learning where they know and, and maybe it's even documented that, you know, they are, they do much better in this kind of face to face class, then they do it in an online class. And so if you have the ability for some choice in this, then you have the ability to provide that opportunity for students across the board. So that would be one method. And another thing that would probably be required if, especially if you had a lot of students who wanted to be in classes, some limit on how many seats are available. Right. And so if you've only got, you know, 15 seats available in the classroom, normally you might see 30 or 40 you'd have to have some sort of an ability, a way to kind of have students sign up or make reservations, seat reservations, kinda like we all wish we could do restaurant reservations these days.

Brian (26:29):

So so that would be another approach that I would expect to see, to have some limit on that. And that flexibility then provides the opportunity for students who, you know, who are quite legitimately, may not be coming to at all for the fall term if there are, if they're a student coming from far away and they may choose to take all their courses in an online mode if they're available because that way they're not, maybe they get to stay home and not have to pay for the room and board or whatever. There are other ones who may have to, you know, if you know, they test positive or they're exposed to someone, they may have to self-quarantine for, you know, a week, two weeks, three weeks. And so this gives them a kind of a built in opportunity to stay up with the class and not miss out on all of that.

Brian (27:11):

You know, that instructional and that learning experience. And so you kind of have that capacity built in to support those needs as well. I would expect there would be probably quite a few students who may be choosing not to come into classes even if they're available. And no one wants to feel forced into an uncomfortable situation health wise either. So that would help us alleviate that situation. And you know, the third thing we're talking about too is this term instructional continuity. It's the first time I started hearing about it, this, you know, like two months ago. How do we keep going? Although we've had that question asked on our campus before, we have issues with forest fires and smoke, especially in, in San Francisco Bay area the last few years. We have issues with threatened transit strikes our Metro system. Sometimes, you know there's a potential strike looming and we're almost all commuters. And so that can be a real hazard. We have, of course, the threat of earthquakes, so other places have hurricanes and things like that. And so whenever one of these was looming, I would get, sometimes I get questions from our senior administration, Hey, could we just all teach online? You know, and, and the answer was, I was, I used to oversee our academic technology unit. And I say, well, we have the technology to do that. The LMS supports it. Our network supports that. We've got the tools. But the challenge would be how do you get your faculty to do that? You know, could that really quick flip in a way that we, you



know, we would normally be supporting. Well, now, you know, that decision was made for us.

Brian (28:32):

You know, mid-March we're all teaching online and yet, you know, so everybody has had to do it. And so what we're, what we're experiencing is, is you know, kind of the lowest baseline, I think, of what we could expect. You know, we're just, we're pretty much doing video, remote, remote video watching and having that kind of conversation without really treating the online component of it as a legitimate learning path or a substantial learning paths. I guess a robust, well if we can design, if we decide to choose more HyFlex in programs departments or across the university then we have this idea of built in instructional continuity, not at just a barely good enough, just a sit in a zoom class for all day. If we have the opportunity to build in the asynchronous component or the online component in a meaningful way kind of by design, then we're much more likely to have an engaged and effective learning experience for all of our students. If we have to go flip, flip back fully online, right. We've, we flipped online already. So, you know, I think most schools would probably be able to do that again. And yet I don't think very many are satisfied with, with the way it's turning out as far as the learning experience for students. And in the longterm, not sustainable as a, as a continuity plan in my opinion.

Lillian (29:46):

Right. You know, I've surveyed my students who are all first year students in North Carolina and asked them, I said, what would you do if you find out that the fall is going to be online? And I was surprised to know that most of them had already signed leases to be back in the town though our school is and they were planning, well, if I'm doing online, I'll just be in my apartment, you know, on campus and be doing it there. And so I think there is some flexibility that maybe some of them would want to come in if there were chances or opportunities to have that face to face that sense of normalcy that I know a lot of students are craving. But also have that choice to say, I'm not going to put my health at risk. I'm not going to put others, or I live with immunocompromised people or they've tested positive or something like that.

Lillian (30:39):

If they're, you know, moving into a community that they've come from, from home. This is still quite possible. Who knows what's going to happen in the fall, whether we start online, if we start seated or we have these kind of social distancing implementation measures in there that this as it has in the name flexible, it is a flexible way to offer instruction, but it does need to be planned ahead of time, not this emergency remote. So at least we've got for the fall, we've got some time to be thinking about ways to do this better than if it were an immediate change.

Brian (31:24):

Yeah, yeah, that's exactly correct. And I, and I think the idea of being flexible is important. So even institutions that are looking for looking at a course model, like, like HyFlex courses, which are also known by other names and other places. You know, in the book we talk about that, but there's going to be a lot more flexibility I think, in what's what they would call high flex. And so in your situation, you may be controlling more of the students and limiting the flexibility or even restricting flexibility in some cases or, or you know, the various modes of online that you, that you support. I think most of those, what's important when I talk to institutions to have some sort of strategic direction, make some decisions about how you're supporting that student learning experience and the faculty teaching experience and then find a way to kind of create course models that will work to support your own strategic approaches and your goals effectively, but be ready to adapt, because, we all kind of have to have an agile mindset these days in our entire lives, you know, including our higher education environment.

Lillian (32:29):

Yes. And you know, any group of faculty is going to have folks who are ready and willing and excited to do this, and then other members of the faculty where this will be a very hard climb. I would say for them to figure out this. A lot of the technology or to really rethink how they've been doing teaching for a long time, but it is very student centered. So let's say I'll start with design advice. Is there a best design advice for if you wanted to go high flex, like something that is that's must have that if you don't have it, it's not really HyFlex that you would give. You

would advise somebody, maybe just your regular faculty member who may not be really integrated with educational technology or be on that advanced slope, let's say. What is your best advice to faculty members?

Brian (33:31):

Well, I think first of all, I would, I would make the decision to HyFlex or not, and to include the flexibility or not. If you don't need to include the flexibility or it's not going to work in your situation, then don't, don't try it. Don't call it Hyflex. It's really more than a hybrid or a co-mode or a kind of a dual path model, you know, because there are certain things I would build into a HyFlex course that I might not build into just an online course. It was just an online course or just a face to face course, you know, kind of clearly. And so if there's never going to be that kind of crossover then then I think, you know, then, then I would choose that as a, as different paths. And then I would look at, okay, how do I make the most effective online course?

Brian (34:08):

How do I make the most effective face to face course and focus on those kinds of things. In that sense, it's probably would, would feel more like a, you know, a double design effort, especially if you've never taught face to face. That'll be, that'll be a much harder, harder pull for many faculty, especially those who haven't done much online teaching in a fully online course or hybrid. So that's the first thing is to make that, make sure that strategic choices made right and make sure it's clear. And then we talk about essentially looking first of all at the course learning outcomes and looking to see whether or not or how well those learning outcomes can be met in, you know, the assumption is they're able to be met in the face to face mode. That's typically where most people are starting, but to can they be well met in an online course.

Brian (34:52):

You know, if a student was going to take an online only path, could they meet those learning outcomes? And in most cases the answer is probably yes. Although there may be some areas you know, or it's thinking around, you know, performance art and what thinking of throwing clay, right? Making pots and things

like that. Or in some STEM areas with complicated labs situations, there may not be a good way to do that online. And in those cases you might then, if you're going to do it high flex, you kind of have to think of, well do we modify high flex and prevent, prevent the online piece for that and kind of force people to come in and manage that in some way. Or is this not a good candidate for high flex? Maybe this is a candidate just for a, you know, a traditional hybrid approach where you're going to be in class, you're going to be out class, and we're going to kind of control that based on what's best in those situations.

Brian (35:35):

And so the outcomes are important and to see whether they need to be revised or not. After that we would then talk about, well, the three major elements of a course experience from the teacher and the student perspective are typically content. You know, and in most cases it's not hard to get content available for online students. You know, digitizing content, digital content is all over the place these days. So that's one thing that sometimes faculty have to create their own content and then digitize it. So that, that could be a major development effort on their part. So content is one thing that's typically the easiest in my experience. There's a lot of work there perhaps, but a lot of times it's just collecting. And then organizing and putting together an a learning management system in a way that students can follow, you know, another important, then I usually leap to assessment.

Brian (36:22):

All right. Cause we're, we all have our assessment methods, you know, for students that we believe strongly in in many, many cases. And we have to consider whether or not they would work well in an online environment and what might have to change if you're doing project based assessment or significant writing, this based assessment that might not have to change much if at all. In, in an online environment. If you're doing traditional high stakes testing assessments, well the form of the test might not have to change. And yet you may want to or need to bring in a proctoring solution of some sort so that you can help mitigate that. The chance of a know students not being completely honest with their answers, you know, et cetera, et cetera. So when we talk with faculty, which we do try to kind of

get them more towards thinking about low stakes testing if they have to do testing as well as more authentic assessments.

Brian (37:11):

You know, where students are demonstrating understanding in ways other than a multiple choice test. And in many cases that's possible. So assessments and other important conversation, and that can be a significant challenge for faculty, not necessarily to create new ways of doing it, but there's often a lot more workload involved in assessing, you know, a complex research paper you know, or even just as you know, a six page paper if you want compared to a hundred question, multiple choice tests that the LMS is, is, is serving, sorting, grading, and spitting out a grade within like 30 seconds. So the assessments and other parts, but then probably the one that kind of appeals to me the most is the engaging students aspect. If we're a classroom instructor, we've been doing that for a while.

Brian (37:58):

We have our ways of engaging students that, that work well for us. And for many of our students in most cases I'd say and yet if we never taught online, that may be a whole new world of things to discover is how do you engage students online in ways that are meaningful to students and also don't, don't require you to be online all the time answering those texts at 12 midnight when your students have to be working on your course. Right? And so developing ways to engage students throughout, you know, between class sessions or throughout a term in the online world is an important part. Asynchronous discussions are one tool. We do a lot of zoom kind of question and answer sessions or you know, a typical office hours, another tool. A lot of students seem to enjoy those when they do have questions, you know, things, things like that become important. Related to that. And if you have synchronous students in a live class session and classroom students is engaging the synchronous students online live, you know, as if they were also face to face students. And so you want to make sure that they are engaged and invited into the conversations, you know, the activities you know, the thinking kind of things you might be doing in the classroom and not just kind of left out there to watch from the sides.

Lillian (39:15):

So how would you do that with let's say students, you've got 10 students in class and 10 students on the zoom. What would that look like if you are inviting those students on the zoom or whichever synchronous platform you're using? Can you give me an example of something you've done in your class?

Brian (39:34):

Sure. One of the things is to make sure the students are visible to the other students in the class. And so when we're doing this in our class at the front where we'd have our projection screen, we make sure we've got the, you know, the little student video windows, even though they may be small, they're still there. And people can actually see that there's a person there, there's some emotion there. So encouraging them to have their videos on. I know some faculty require it, many don't some provide, you know, a point or two for, for students and you know, which gets like 90% of them turning on their videos. So that's an important element I think is because you can then you have that visual, a little bit more of a visual presence. And so that's an important part of engagement. Even though there's nothing a lot, there's not a lot of active there.

Brian (40:13):

But what I do is when I'm asking a question of the class, sometimes I'll ask specifically for one of our online students to provide, you know you know, some sort of feedback. A lot of times I'll have a list of things that, you know, they get to choose from and talk to. Here's here, like 10 topics and we're going to talk about all of these and each one of you or you know, or half of you at least are going to pick one of these and kind of lead, you know, open us up for 30 seconds on, you know, these kinds of things. And so making sure that the online students are as well represented as the face to face students and those kinds of opportunities. I use the chat window a lot and even have, like I said, students in class if we're asking a question and expecting some response from them, put the responses in the chat window, which kind of puts everybody into that same kind of platform and then we can, you know, we can use that to kind of leverage the rest of the conversation.

Brian (41:04):

So they're typical things like that. And we sometimes will do polling—a class poll. That's easier to do when you have more online students than maybe in the classroom because it's kind of hard to get everybody in that polling kind of thing if they're not already in the system, but those are things that some other people have been using pretty effectively.

Lillian (41:27):

So are some of the students that are sitting in the class also on the zoom connected?

Brian (41:34):

Yes, in many situations they are, especially if the faculty encourages it and I tend to encourage it because in part I recruit them officially and informally as my co-facilitators. And so when they're in the, in the session they're watching the chat window and they'll let me know you know, there's a question here or a comments being made or there's a conversation going on over here that we should probably look at that I might not see if I'm not looking directly at the screen all the time.

Lillian (42:00):

Yeah. All right. That, that does bring everybody together and then your asynchronous students can they can see the log of the chat. Right? They can see what's going on, live with the video and then they can also have their own conversation, too, asynchronously that sort of built on that.

Brian (42:19):

That's right. And for all the asynchronous discussions in, in my classes, everybody gets the digest once a day. That gives them all the posts from the discussions in the classroom. Students are at least invited into all those conversations and sometimes they're required to be part of them as well. And as a matter of fact, in some of my courses I've, I've kind of taken some of the time in class and given that back to students with the understanding that they're going to be participating in the asynchronous discussion throughout the week with all the other online

students. So essentially it's kind of hybridizes the high flex a little bit and then saying, okay, well instead of being here for X amount of time, we're going to take 20% of that time, give it back to you, but require you to be in this online online discussion. So essentially taking some of the in class discussion and moving it online. So it's an equal, equal kind of platform for everyone to use.

Lillian (43:08):

I see. Well that is part of your values, right? The equivalency and reusability and accessibility, they're all there and learner choice, all of that is incorporated in just that one sentence you were talking about. And so, okay. So now we have got a really good idea of what high flex is. You've also kind of pointed our faculty into the direction of wondering should, should I do high flex or shouldn't I, which is the first step to take. So let's say they've decided to do HyFlex what are the best resources that faculty should have handy as they set about designing their HyFlex model or course?

Brian (43:50):

Right. Well, I think that the most challenging thing for faculty new to this will be to think of building an online path through their course. Adding some components to support the fully online learner that you know, allow them to build off of what they already have face to face. So they have a good syllabus. They've got resources that they've used before or have planned on using and those aren't necessarily going to change. The question is how are you going to engage students? Really those are the big questions. How are you going to engage students in the learning process if they're one synchronous and, or asynchronous dependent upon what, what you're supporting with that. And then two, how are you going to assess their learning? Those are the most, those are the most important things that I find faculty have to work through.

Brian (44:34):

And so looking through the objectives and the outcomes, making sure that they can be met online. And, and when you're asking those questions, you may not have the answers to that. And so that's where you kind of have to go back to some of the existing, you know, the expert resources out there. You know, I there's a,



there's a book by Kurt Bonk and Charles Graham, *The Handbook of Blended Learning* that tells the stories of lots of different places in many situations doing classic blended learning. Typically where there is either a mix like this, but there may not be the flexibility. Or there may be this idea of, you know, you're in class, you're out of class, you're in class, you're out of class. Well, stories like that often provide a lot of insight into how this solution works in this particular situation.

Brian (45:15):

And faculty can learn from that. I've also seen, especially this last couple of months all of our, you know, most of our professional organizations, their message boards, their Facebook pages, whatever, have been full of people sharing ideas on how to teach effectively online or how to teach at least good enough online and how to survive in the synchronous world. And so some of those conversations actually go deeper and there's a lot of resources being shared across the board. I often will send people to a couple of sites. I know a University of Central Florida and University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee seem to have really good publicly available sites for supporting a blended learning and hybrid learning designs. And so once again, you can learn a lot from those kinds of things. Almost all of our institutions have some capacity support to support faculty who want to learn how to teach online.

Brian (46:03):

And so your local resources for how to teach online can often be very useful for you, especially if they're able to kind of maybe scale down their expectations. We often have a quality matters or in California we have a quality learning and teaching model and rubric. And so when we're asking, when we're looking for faculty, when we're providing faculty design support, we usually start at that level, say, okay, here's how you have to design kind of this top level certified online course. And I think that in this world we're in now, if we can scale that down a little and say, well, here, here are some ideas, but you know, what, if you can start here and you know, do a couple of things that meet the engagement and the assessment and the content goals that's probably a good place to start. And then you can think of maybe you add this, maybe you can add that over over time.

Brian (46:49):

My own design developed really over probably two or three years as the technology changed and as my ability to manage the technology changed as well. So I certainly didn't start oriented up with the designs I did. And, and when I talked to faculty now, even though I might show them, here's where, here's my course, here's what I'm doing, I kind of peel back some of the layers, say, okay, well you don't need to do this. I do that because of, you know, whatever, you know, these factors. But if you can just do something like this, that's probably a good enough place to start. So resources like that around blended learning, around online learning. And then of course if they really interested in hearing more high flux stories, there's the high flex book we released in October the hybrid flexible course design book.

Brian (47:32):

And there's, there are case studies in there, six or seven case studies, different universities, and there's more, there's a lot of interest now of adding case studies. We'll kind of have probably have a whole new unit on COVID 19 response stories. We don't call it that, but you know kind of emerging efforts or things like that. So there, there are a lot of stories in there and every author there is, is a willing to entertain questions and respond to people, have specific questions about their situations, community colleges, you know, R-1 universities, comprehensive universities like ours et cetera.

Lillian (48:06):

Great. Yes. Well we always have resources that we link to the episode page on our thinkudl.org website. So we'll have your book that came out in October of 2019 listed there along with I wrote down some of the resources. We'll make sure we've got those handbooks on blended learning and sites with university of central Florida and university of Wisconsin Milwaukee. So we'll make sure that our listeners can have a plethora of resources as they start to think about what might be a good high flex model for them to put into practice in the fall. So thank you so much for your time and in all of your explanations and in explaining the values, especially of really what makes a hybrid flexible or high flex course. And thank you

so much for all of the work you've put into it to make this transition a little easier for those who are able to employ a high flex model. So thank you very much, Brian.

Brian (49:06):

Oh, you're very welcome Lillian, and to all your listeners as well, you know, we're just, we're trying to help as much as we can. That's why we created the open access version of the book rather than a, you know, a pay version.

Lillian (49:18):

That's great. Yeah, I've been looking through it as I prepare for this and found so many really wonderful ideas and explanations as to why this is such a good model. So thank you.

Lillian (49:41):

You can follow the think UDL podcast on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to find out when new episodes will be released and also see transcripts and additional materials at the thinkudl.org website. The Think UDL podcast is made possible by college star. The star stands for supporting transition, access and retention in postsecondary settings, and the website provides free resources and instructional AIDS based on UDL principles. If you'd like to know more, go to the college star.org website. Additional support for the podcast is made possible by Appalachian state university where if you call it Appalay-shun, I'll throw an apple-at-cha. The music on the podcast was performed by the Oddyssey Quartet, comprised of Rex Shepherd, David Pate, Bill Folwell, and Jose Cochez. Our sound engineer is Tanner Jones, and I am your host Lillian Nave. Thank you for joining us on the Think UDL podcast.