Public universities confront changes

Posted on **April 28, 2014** by **Carol Hixson**
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Ithaka S+R has completed a study on behalf of Lumina Foundation to understand the growing but contested role of technology-enhanced education at public flagship universities. The findings, summarized in a brief report produced by Deanna Marcum, are very interesting and uncover a growing disconnect between what universities are doing and how students are approaching their education, as discussed by Bryan Alexander in his blog post on the topic.

For my part, I was most interested in the issues surrounding faculty uptake of new technologies, as noted by Marcum in her report:

> *"Faculty time is probably the most significant impediment to integrating technology into the classroom. Faculty obligations toward research often take precedence over their other activities, which include pursuing any type of teaching initiative. Because integrating technology into the classroom requires more time and attention than traditional forms of instruction, the opportunity cost is quite high. The additional effort required by an online course includes time to deconstruct a course and rethink its approach and delivery, to learn about the latest trends in technological tools and applications that might be relevant to the course, and to create the online and digital materials. Online courses are new to many, and so there is also a learning curve that does not exist for methods that are familiar. The additional effort required by an online course includes time to deconstruct a course and rethink its approach and delivery, to learn about the latest trends in technological tools and applications that might be relevant to the course, and to create the online and digital materials.*
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> *A common consequence of these time constraints on tenured and tenure-track faculty is that non-tenure-track faculty are the major initiators of technology-enhanced education. As a way to deal with the limited time and multiple roles of faculty, a number of departments have hired lecturers to help support the teaching loads. Nearly all of the universities in this study have, whenever possible, moved away from adjuncts (who have been traditionally hired by rapidly-growing departments facing heavy student demands for introductory courses) to professional teachers under contract for a fixed period of multiple years who feel more connected to the university and to the students. These semi-permanent lecturers, or instructors, often have a great deal of interest in pedagogy, more time, and more of an incentive to develop innovative teaching than research faculty. Accordingly, they appear to be responsible for developing many of the online courses at institutions we visited."*

The summary Technology to the Rescue is very brief and worth reading.