

Academic Technology Services'

Go Virtual Unconference: Student Panelists

Fall 2020



Jose Aceves

Engineering M.S.

Courses Taken:

- CECS 475: Software Development with Frameworks (34 students)
- CECS 524: Advanced Topics in Programming Languages (39 students)
- CECS 526: Advanced Operating Systems (19 students)

On Technology in the Classroom:

My recommendation is for instructors who primarily lecture off PowerPoint slides. It is hard for me (and I'm sure for other students as well) to stay focused during a lecture when all we see are PP slides and all we hear is the instructor reading the information on them. I would like it if instructors made lectures more interactive, or if they included mini problems that we could solve together to help solidify the concepts being covered.



Samantha Dickson

*School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Emergency Management
Master of Emergency Services Administration*

Courses Taken:

- EMER 548 - Risk, Crisis and Interagency Communication - 15 students
- EMER 540 - Emergency Management Organizations

On Technology in the Classroom:

As a student, I have had to engage others in discussion, had to conduct interviews of clients for reports and for group project work - the time difference is sometimes a challenge and the internet service is not always reliable. The competition for the virtual space must be considered.

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Aaron Goldsmith

*School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Emergency Management
Master of Emergency Services Administration*

On Technology in the Classroom:

Technology innovation investment for this term required a more robust desktop, issues I was having was related to running multiple programs at the same time, causing my system to freeze and crash. Prior to this term I invested in 4 monitors, yes 4, why so many you might ask, well I would answer it simply by saying it will increase productivity ten folds. Having more than one monitor will cause an increase as you are not opening and closing windows, you have a web browser open with a working word document at the same time, productivity increased. Having multiple displays allows me to see the Zoom, write notes, have a browser open and have other documents open all at the same time and having them all visible.

The writing lab is now online, in a way I am liking that more than the in-person as the distractions are minimal, as I am with my tutor. I think that interpersonal connections can help, but I am getting used to the remote learning and tutoring.

Similarly, I have taken many classes online both here at CSULB and at UCLA. I do have to say how classes that require a strict discussion board with deadline creates an atmosphere of dialogue and discussion. I would tell teachers who are not implementing such practices to address this as it helps with the remote learning. This can also include areas of what you did this week, what healthy practices you had, lessons from mistakes and so on. The point is to create an atmosphere where learning and expansion of our minds are encouraged.

Most of my classes are 10-15 students, any more can become overwhelming as personal connections and conversation will become lost in static. Groups should be 3-4, as this for me has been most useful any more again issues of contributions can arise.

I am a student registered with BMAC and have accommodations for all my classes. I am also a RET US Army Veteran from OIF, to other veterans Happy Vet-Day.

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Mariah Meyer

College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Marine Biology B.S.

I am a fourth year Marine Biology student, with an emphasis on ecology and elasmobranch biology. I am currently doing my own research in the CSULB Shark Lab for BIOL 496. I hope to one day have a career that reflects my values of conservation and the importance of the ocean ecosystem.

Courses Taken:

- BIOL 345- Comparative animal physiology (73 students)
- BIOL 345L- Comparative animal physiology lab (separate from course) (23 students)
- BIOL 419- Ichthyology (35 students)
- BIOL 455- Marine Ecology (25 students)
- BIOL 490- Elasmobranch Biology (16 students)
- BIOL 496- Undergraduate directed research with Dr. Chris Lowe (2 students)

Statement on Technology in the Classroom:

When teaching asynchronous classes, I was really drawn to the flexible office hours my Marine Ecology class had. The same class had all assignments due on Friday which was very beneficial- I did not have to memorize any due dates and I could complete the class assignments when I had time. Both of my asynchronous classes have Zoom office hours which is very beneficial to my learning as I like to ask questions. In my Comparative Animal physiology class, the zoom lectures were recorded and posted for us to view at our own time. The teacher wrote out notes on a tablet and voiced over while talking while using PowerPoint to supplement some of the lectures. When it comes to asynchronous classes I prefer the format of my Marine ecology class- there was no lecture, but reading, assignments, videos, discussion boards and concept maps were all involved and due at the end of the week. I feel a bit pressured that I have to watch a lecture by a certain time when there are recorded lectures. Something else I really loved was the use of discussion boards in asynchronous classes, it made things seem a bit more normal. Even if the discussion boards were not always about the topics we were learning in class, I think they were very beneficial to my mental health and to making this semester feel "normal".

In my synchronous classes, most of them operated the same way- log into Zoom, watch the lecture, and leave. When teachers uploaded their slides or lecture outline before class, I find it extremely helpful. In my Comparative animal physio lab class, it was a synchronous lab with asynchronous assignments. I found this to be a bit odd as we would do an assignment related to the lab lecture but

on our own at our own time. In my Elasmobranch biology class, we followed the same standard synchronous class standard. During each class period we had a student present a scientific paper that our professor recommended. I was unsure of how this would work first, but I soon became a big supporter of this idea. We were able to spend the first 15 minutes of class talking about relevant scientific literature and then have a lecture going more in depth on that topic- which gave me an idea on how a topic can be tested. I think incorporating scientific literature into a class is a great idea, especially for STEM students who want to go onto graduate studies.

One of the biggest problems I have had this semester is with Respondus Lockdown Browser and test format. My Mac has no problem taking a test with the Lockdown Browser if every question is on the same page, when teachers put questions on different pages my computer begins to stall, and it costs me time on my tests which makes me very anxious. Another issue I had with one class specifically was the time for take home tests. As a perfectionist, I like to have lots of time to start my projects/writing early so I can put my best foot forward. I did not have enough time for this one class' take home test which had 3 essay questions all requiring research and scientific paper citation, so it was very hard for me to put out work I was proud of. I would like teachers to re-evaluate the time given for take home tests and assignments, even though we're locked down I still work 15+ hours a week and I stress about deadlines. My last recommendation I can give for our educators is to please give less busy work. I know you want us to still have the workload pre-COVID but busy work is not the answer. Like I stated above, I stress about the deadlines and just try to "get the assignment done" rather than actually learn. For one of my classes, we had to key out over 60 fish species and write five details about them including pictures. This was an extremely lengthy assignment and I know I did not learn much because I was stressing about the deadline. It would be quite advantageous to extend the deadlines so us students can take our time and learn.

I did love a few things in my online classes. In one of my asynchronous classes, everything was completely at our own pace and due at the end of the week. I love this style of teaching because I don't have to stress as much with deadlines. I am more apt to actually teach myself the material and learn on my own because I am given so much time. In both of my classes that had a lab portion (Ichthyology and Comparative animal physiology) the labs were executed as perfect as can be in this situation. In comparative animal physiology, I had an amazing TA who really went above and beyond with his demonstrations and that made the class really enjoyable. This class also used an online lab simulator- PhysioEX by Pearson. While the activities might have been redundant, I found that I learned a lot with this simulation. I highly recommend using this tool with labs. For my other laboratory class my teacher actually made us dissection kits and let us pick up specimens from campus. This was just outstanding teaching- I miss being in lab and doing the labs so much that I was happy to be able to dissect in my own home. In one of the two dissections we did, our teacher asked us to pick up a whole fish from the market so we could look at bone structure. This way any students that didn't reside in Long Beach or couldn't commute to campus could participate as well! The labs were led on Zoom as our teacher was doing them with us. I also really loved the addition of relevant scientific papers as a supplement to what we are learning. In one of my synchronous classes we reviewed scientific papers before lecturing on the same topic. Using scientific literature in a class is a great way to increase participation and prepare us for the future. Overall, I really appreciated the flexibility my teachers had this semester with office hours and other assignments. Being easily reachable in an online world is key, and I appreciated all teachers who reply to my emails in a timely manner. It was also quite obvious when a professor did not want to teach on Zoom, I know it's a completely different ball game but when the educators are excited and able to involve the class- it really does make a difference.