WCET *Frontiers* "What's Next" Interviews
Spring 2020
Interviewer: Russ Adkins

Rebecca Van de Vord, Assistant VP of Academic Outreach and Innovations shares Washington State University's Distance Education Tool Kit and other strategies that enable instruction while her university's campuses are closed.
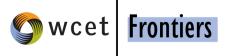
Washington State University is a land-grant public institution with 30,000 FTE. WSU is based in eastern Washington and operates six campuses, one of which is the Global Campus, whose mission is to reach primarily adult learners who prefer to learn and study on their own turf.

The early onset of the pandemic—time to prepare. Western Washington, including Seattle, was impacted by Covig-19 early, in January and February. WSU began preparing for the pandemic in early March, providing its faculty with professional development to help them prepare to move their instruction online and to better understand the differences between asynchronous and synchronous learning and methodologies. Over a two-week period prior to spring break, 800 faculty participated, with training on Zoom, Panopto, and other tools already used by WSU, and in varying degrees, familiar to both online and campus-based faculty. WSU's western-most campus, which was nearest the outbreak's epicenter, closed prior the March 16 start of spring break; the remaining land-based campuses closed with the Governor's stay-at-home order later in March.

Distance Education Tool Kit. The University's Academic Outreach and Innovation Division had previously developed a comprehensive "Distance Education Tool Kit" to provide instructional continuity during inclement weather. This tool kit has been transformed into an impressive, virtual one-stop repository of resources supporting students and faculty with limited experience with online learning:

- A Student Guide for Preparing to Complete Courses Remotely includes:
    - A Blackboard Learn Tutorial.
    - a sample online course.
    - instructions on activating the student's Zoom account and instructions on using Zoom for student meetings.
    - tools to record and share course assignments.
    - tips for being successful online.
    - accessing technology help.
- For faculty:
    - A readiness assessment for faculty to use to identify gaps and training to address these, including a schedule of workshops available via Zoom, and companion resources.
    - Resources pertaining to supporting students who have approved accommodations and tips for creating accessible course materials.
    - Toolkit for Extended Distance Delivery.

Students with some familiarity with learning online still need help. Fortunately, 90% of WSU students had some experience with digital learning, either through online or blended instruction. However, the bigger challenge for students was adjusting to disrupted jobs and lives and doing all their learning at home. They needed structure, and they needed resources. The University responded with an intensive level of personal communication and engagement, food pantries, chrome books to lend, and wi-fi solutions.

Faculty development continuously evolves. Moving forward, the Global Campus, which is one of four pillars of WSU's Academic Outreach and Innovation, is planning to award a *certificate* to faculty successfully completing ongoing virtual training on topics such as how to better connect with students, and to authentically assess their learning online. Rebecca wants the faculty to know that the Global Campus is supporting their uncertain journey into remote learning. "We got you out here; now we want to support you as you move along this journey."

Operating silo-free. The Global Campus production team, which in normal times rolls online courses over from term to term, is helping faculty utilize Global Campus course shells to facilitate online delivery for campus courses. And, the University has stepped up to absorb the expense of scaling Proctorio from Global Campus to University-wide use to support assessment and the integrity of student work. This expense is not being passed on to students, including Global Campus students who were previously paying for service.

A centralized support infrastructure that could rapidly deploy professional development and just-in-time support has been a major factor in WSU's successful transition to remote learning. Their existing "Distance Education Tool Kit" provided a good foundation for the more comprehensive version that supports students and faculty during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Existing relationships between the University's Academic Outreach and Innovation Division and the five, land-based campuses supports collaboration and coordination, another big plus as the University moves into summer term and beyond.