

WCET *Frontiers* “What’s Next” Interviews

Spring 2020

Interviewer: Russ Adkins

Mark Porcaro, Executive Director of Online Learning & OneStop Student Services

Wichita State has been bucking the downward enrollment trend, with fall enrollment exceeding 16,000 (unduplicated), the largest since the 1980s. Its 22 fully online programs support about 10% of the total enrollment, and nearly 25% of all credit hours are being earned online. Regardless of delivery modality, every University course has, by default, a Blackboard shell. Faculty already have access to a robust array of professional development to prepare to develop or teach online.

OneStop. The university supports a “one-stop” student services center for all students, online and on-campus, whose front-line staff addresses 80% of student requests and questions related to student services (admissions, advising, etc.). The remaining 20% are handed off to the individual offices for support; these requests are more complicated and take more time to address. The OneStop has proven to be a very valuable resource for students as the University rapidly moved from on-campus to remote learning.

Remote learning = emergency access to education. Faced with two weeks to move all instruction online, WSU’s instructional design and online learning teams were not able to build online courses for all faculty that had been teaching only on-campus courses. A ‘triage’ approach is being used, focused initially on creating tools and support for faculty who do the heavy lifting needed to move their course to remote learning modality. This training and support are reinforced with a campus-wide network of volunteer peer faculty mentors, each an alumnus of a *faculty fellows program*, whose members have completed advanced professional developed on methods and standards for online instruction. The next triage focus has been supporting students, who must depend on faculty and the LMS for access to their courses. More recently, live drop-in sessions are being provided for faculty, while the OneStop is supporting remote students. [Updated information customized for faculty and students can be found here.](#)

Video is not the short-term delivery solution. The University is strongly committed to supporting students with disabilities, and as a result, the use of live video for course lectures is being discouraged. More important, the expectation is that accessibility is built into what instructors deliver, especially when they have students who have registered support needs.

Summer, and the learning is online. In previous years, fully online courses have constituted 50% of the summer course schedule. Mark’s priority is ratcheting up the quality of summer term online courses with instructional design support. Remote learning offerings will be addressed next, with the goal to substantially improving summer term courses over those that have been rapidly deployed for spring. Through continuous improvement strategies, the online learning team hopes that the best of summer’s remote learning classes can be eventually added to current “online” offerings.

Fiscal and policy issues going forward. Remote learning has unique costs that have not yet been factored into tuition and fees, no doubt a challenge faced by most institutions. Cost containment is a real issue associated with scaling video collaboration and remote proctoring tools. Mark's team will use a tiered approach, first considering less expensive solutions, such as university faculty proctoring their exams. The University does not want to make education more expensive for existing students already struggling financially.