

AN ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE TO THE WHYS AND HOWS OF BLENDED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Given the importance of administrative attention to blended learning, this article adumbrates the institutional benefits but also the institutional challenges of this integration of online and on-campus instruction. The reasons for engaging in blended learning determine how it will play out, so the *why* is given precedence over the *how*. But there is an attempt to elaborate the methods even more extensively than the reasons, to drill down into the considerations that must be taken into account in any successful implementation. Just how the details will sort out will necessarily vary from one institution to the next, but there are certain considerations that seem genuinely indispensable, the keys to success or failure, sustainability or aborted effort.

KEYWORDS

Blended Learning, Hybrid Courses, Institutional Change, Degree Completion, Assessment and Evaluation, Sustainability and Scalability

I. INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS OF BLENDED LEARNING

The challenges administrative leadership must rise to in making blended learning successful are considerable. They include such formidable tasks as change management (at all levels), implementing strategies for successful support, using data to guide planning and decision-making, overcoming resistance, and addressing the policy issues. Meeting these kinds of challenges—even giving them serious consideration—demands some expected return on such investments. And the returns will depend on an institution's goals for blended learning. This hybrid form of instruction is not a single or simple phenomenon, and neither are its outcomes. Even defining blended learning, an exercise discharged by so many pieces in this volume, most notably by Anthony Picciano's "Blending with a Purpose" [1], forces the realization that the *what* of blended learning cannot be stated without also acknowledging—even foregrounding—the *why*. The key is always the purpose and point of an institution's engagement with blended learning. Just stating the supposedly self-evident aspects of blended learning helps to drive this home. As an integration of online and face-to-face instruction, it relies wholly on neither mode. Faculty and students (and they can be any or all of those at an institution) need to meet less often, displacing face-to-face time with interaction that is mediated by technology (itself a multifaceted nexus of considerations). The ways and means of a blended learning initiative could entail vast institutional change and enormous demands on resources, or they could have very localized and limited impact. So much depends on the expectations and motives for engaging in blended learning. It's logical, therefore, to outline the reasons before taking on the challenges.

B. Economic Motivations for Engaging in Blended Learning

Granted: change, particularly the kind of institutional or cultural change a commitment to blended learning can entail, must come at a cost. Much of the cost will be frontloaded. The start-up investment may be considerable. And the return on investment may be more in qualitative benefit than in quantifiable monetary gain. How this falls out will of course vary according to specific institutional contexts and circumstances. It is also important to see how the allocation of resources can be offset by real but perhaps unforeseen or once-removed gains—reduced opportunity costs for students, for example. But such projected gains can seem a kind of special pleading, not least of all at the campus where such resources must be mobilized, and during an economic downturn. It is better to start with more immediate, tangible, measurable gains. Among these may be the recouping of investments already made.

1. Reaping What Is Already Sown

Consider the following scenarios:

- College A has made a considerable investment in an online course management system that is under-utilized. With the exception of a few early adopters quick to seize on the possibilities, most faculty use the CMS as a place to hang the syllabus and a few course documents—if they use it at all. And most don't. What complicates this under-utilization is the fact that the CMS is, for students, the most visible purchase made with a student technology fee now in place for some time.
- College B has made a commitment to local outreach as a means of expanding enrollments, particularly among adult students who are in-service professionals. The evening and weekend classes for these students aren't working. They are under-attended, and students who do register for them complain that they are exhausted when they come to these classes, or take them at real personal cost as regards day care, family time, and some modicum of leisure.
- At College C, students and even faculty are complaining that the online course management system is being used the wrong way. In addition to the same amount of class attendance, they are supposed to engage in discussion boards and other online interaction. Meanwhile, since they all commute, they see a missed opportunity to reduce their commuting time and gas consumption.
- College D has been engaged in online learning for 10+ years primarily as a means to attract new online students. It is now looking to incorporate blended learning to meet several goals geared to improve its ability to teach its undergraduate students. The initial intent was to utilize existing infrastructure to support both online and blended—however, it became apparent early on that the capacity of that infrastructure needed to be expanded. College D must decide how to expand the infrastructure for its online programs and courses (that are funded through online tuition revenue) to handle the needs of blended learning. Primarily, where to find the additional resources. An organizational consideration is present as well—should the responsibility and driver for the blended effort be housed with the unit responsible for online instruction—the outreach unit?

In each case, it is apparent how blended learning, by repurposing already-made investments, can make what is achieved by those investments more effective and productive. But there is a deeper similarity that bridges such cases with those where new investments would have to be made: especially from the perspective of institutional benefits, blended learning should not be done for its own sake. It should be seen as a solution to a serious problem. To avoid seeming frivolous or ancillary, a merely trendy add-on, blended learning must be put in the service of broad institutional goals. This is particularly true at institutions where blended learning would entail significant re-allocation of resources or significant institutional change.

2. Justifying New Investment

Here are some other scenarios to consider:

- College E faces projected enrollment growth in spite of (and even because of) the economic downturn. At the limit of what its classrooms can accommodate, and with campus parking in a constant state of crisis, it can expect no new funding to do the kind of building out that would accommodate such growth. Yet granting access to qualified applicants is part of its mission, and it needs the revenues new enrollments would bring.
- At College F, an external review confirms what administrators had already suspected: that they lag behind competing schools in the use of technology in instruction. The administrative leadership does not see an important place for fully online instruction, and is still more reluctant to pay for high-end “smart classrooms” that superannuate quickly, but it does want to invest in technology-mediated instruction that serves real needs and reaps real benefits.
- College G has a new strategic plan, one that emphasizes learning outcomes and gives special emphasis to degree completion, noting that research shows the United States fares ever more poorly in international comparisons in that respect [2]. The school stands to gain materially if successful: its own institutional research indicates that job demands and family obligations are taking a toll on student persistence—and, of course, the revenues that retained enrollments bring.

In each case, the projected economic gains are tied to other gains—accommodated enrollment growth, enhanced reputation and competitive edge, improved time to degree—but that is as it should be. In fact, it is important to acknowledge how quickly the benefits that entail measurable gains shade into the more qualitative and less quantifiable benefits.

C. Less Quantifiable (But Perhaps Greater) Benefits of Blended Learning

Most fundamentally, the change blended learning represents is a change in pedagogy. “At its simplest,” say Garrison and Kanuka, “blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” [3]. But much depends on that “thoughtful integration”—so much, in fact, that blended learning succeeds or fails by how effectively faculty are implicated. The prospect of developing blended or hybrid courses can be intimidating, but it is perhaps no stronger than the felt need to keep up with academic uses of technology. Faculty can be resistant, but they can be eager to learn, truly teachable—even to the extent that, as one of us has argued, blended learning can be both a motive and a means to institution-wide faculty development [4]. One reason is that, whatever the resistance to blended or hybrid instruction, it is less than the resistance to fully online instruction. The very nature of the blended learning, its mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the traditional and the technological, makes it more palatable, as has been reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “Even some professors who have been skeptical of online-education projects say that hybrid models could work—as long as faculty members are left in control of the courses” [5]. That insistence on faculty control is a double-edged sword: undirected, blended learning can become a centrifugal force, creating courses so different in format that it becomes impossible to generalize (and plan around) student experiences of them; nevertheless, faculty must have ownership, must feel that blended learning is pursued through (and not against) their prerogatives, their responsibility for the design of instruction. Administrators are right to realize that a consistency in the approach to blended learning is necessary to reap the institutional benefits, but they are no less right to suspect that top-down mandates will not be the way to cultivate such consistency.

With these things in mind, here are a few more scenarios:

- At College H, generational shifts among the students and even the faculty have increased pressure

to use more technology in instruction, and administration is resolved to respond. A special committee has been formed, charged to make sure such uses of technology amount to more than bells and whistles, that they speak to the core mission of teaching and learning.

- College I has a new chief academic officer who has made improvement of teaching her major initiative. It is an ambitious plan, intent on mobilizing the entire faculty, but the question is what would do this without being either too abstract or too discipline-specific. A further complication: the CAO, wary of relying too much on top-down mandates, wants the hallmark to be faculty collaborating with faculty on “best practices.”
- A self-study prior to accreditation review at College J finds that college instruction must now take due cognizance of web-based kinds of knowledge creation and dissemination; the report urges that pedagogy in the new century must include online interaction and online resources, and that faculty must commit themselves to making access to these part of their instruction.

Given a pressing problem to solve, blended learning could seem the ideal solution in a variety of cases. Whether it is a matter of getting technologically or pedagogically up-to-speed, whether the primary impetus comes from the faculty or the administration, whether the change is to be dramatic or gradual, blended learning looms as the *via media*, the middle way. It combines traditional and tech-enhanced approaches. It does not demand the wholesale change in teaching mode fully online instruction requires, but it does require much more commitment and thought than the mere dabbling with technology that can characterize web-enhanced courses. It is like the bed Goldilocks chooses: not too hard, but not too soft. For it to be just right, it has to be the key to unlocking an institutional problem, a way of addressing a real need. When it is time to begin with blended learning (or to take what may have been relatively small-scale experiments with it to the next level), that defined problem or need is the place to begin.

II. THE CHALLENGES OF BLENDED LEARNING

The potential benefits of blended learning are so considerable because blended learning is, at least potentially, the most transformative and pervasive initiative an institution can undertake. It touches on everything, from students and faculty to administration and infrastructure. It can of course be localized in pilot programs or discipline-based ventures, but there is no necessity to keep it fenced in thus. Even if it begins on a small scale, the questions of whether or how to scale up should be addressed at the start. How these questions are posed, much less answered, depends so much on the institution's mission and the needs blended learning is intended to address.

D. A. Developing a Plan

1. Achieving Clarity on Institutional Mission and Goals

It is critical to align any major campus initiative with an institution's mission. This syncing provides a rationale for resource allocation and serves as a barometer in making certain that the effort is consistent with the institution's comprehensive strategy. There must be “mission fit” for any blended learning initiative to be successful, and that must be articulated so it is clear to all at the outset.

Institutional missions in higher education do not differ so radically that a list of the greater goals of blended learning cannot seem to have some relevance. Here are some of those goals already considered:

- Increased Access to Instruction
- Accommodated Enrollment Growth
- Improved Time to Degree
- Better Retention/Persistence

- Enhanced Teaching and Learning
- Technological Skills Acquisition, Improved Information Literacy
- More Efficient Use of Campus Space and Other Resources

It should be clear that these goals are by no means mutually exclusive, but it should be no less clear that any one of them may represent the best “mission fit” for a particular institution, the most appropriate priority depending on an institution’s goals and circumstances.

2. Identifying the Barrier

A variety of pressing needs that create barriers to meeting institutional goals may drive a blended learning initiative. Perhaps the problem is a lack of sufficient classroom space that restricts the institutions ability to accommodate enrollment growth restricting access to education. At another institution, the problem may be a lack of large lecture halls for certain introductory courses, capping enrollment in those courses and negatively impacting time to degree. Identifying the need provides a strategic advantage in marshaling resources where they can be most effective. Continually revisiting the institutional goals keeps the initiative on mission. Examples of how blended learning can be a tool to mitigate these barriers are given in Table 1.

GOAL	BARRIER	STRATEGY	BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Access to Instruction 	Large lecture courses restricted to a few lecture halls	Replace F2F lectures with online lectures Create additional discussion sections using currently allocated classroom space	Increased enrollment opportunity Increased interaction, improved learning effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodated Enrollment Growth 	General lack of classroom space	Replace one out of two class meetings with required online activity utilizing the same classroom for two sections	Increased classroom availability and accommodated enrollment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Time to Degree 	Registration closes quickly in high demand courses creating bottleneck	Re-design curriculum to integrate online and F2F instruction replacing 50% of classroom time with online activities. Open additional sections of courses utilizing existing space.	Timely access to required courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Teaching and Learning 	Large lectures create distance between students and faculty Online tools under-utilized	Establish required participation in online discussion Focus classroom time on faculty/student interaction Make interaction with course content available 24/7	Increased interaction Self-directed learning Improved learning effectiveness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better Retention/ Persistence 	Student need for scheduling flexibility due to life situations	Require fewer campus visits and time on campus	Access to degree programs for time- and place-bound professionals
	Cost of transportation	Replace portion of f2f instruction with online instructional activities	Flexible scheduling to reduce need for stop-out or withdrawals

Table 1

In the above grid, the problem of access is pervasive. Whether it is access to a specific course, access to admission, access when time and place dictate, the cost of access—blended learning has the potential to remove this barrier if systemically and strategically implemented. No less important is access for faculty. We focus on student needs, however, by creating an environment that provides opportunity for faculty to utilize technology to access research and materials, engage their students more effectively, create opportunities for peer interactions—we expand the potential for research, teaching and service. Surely such an initiative would have an impact on the learning experiences and outcomes for the students—otherwise why undertake it? —but that impact would also be enriched by thinking through and capitalizing upon the multitude of likely outcomes for the faculty as well.

Because blended learning is a means to many ends, because any form of it is likely to have myriad ramifications, it is also useful to identify a blended learning strategy and then think it through to its likely consequences and the institutional goals it makes possible. A general and generic outline of matching strategies with goals (rather than the reverse) is given in Table 2.

BLENDDED STRATEGY	ACHIEVABLE GOAL
Blended re-design of large lecture courses with limited classroom space	Increased access to courses Increased interaction Accelerated time to degree
Pedagogically planned use of online and F2F classroom time	Enhanced teaching and learning Improved technological skills Enhanced reputation, competitive edge
Blended instruction for the sake of flexible schedules and timely access to courses and degree programs	Improved retention/persistence Expanded enrollment Accelerated time to degree Increased access to courses
Additional course sections utilizing blended strategy to conserve classroom space	More efficient use of existing resources Increased access to courses Improved retention/persistence Expanded enrollment Accelerated time to degree

Table 2

As Table 2 indicates, there is a good deal of overlap even in the primary goals each blended learning strategy is capable of achieving. The critical distinction is a question of priorities. Is blended learning being done primarily for the sake of improved teaching or better resource management? In neither case can teaching or resource management be ignored, but so much depends on which is given top priority. And so much depends on the circumstances of a specific institutional context. If an institution, interested in using blended learning to conserve classroom space also has an information fluency, initiative underway, that will be critical to the planning an implementation of blended learning, just as will a strategy that foregrounds improvements to teaching and learning but also seeks to expand enrollment.

3. Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses

Once clarity is achieved on goals and strategies, it is time to look beyond “mission fit” to other kinds of fit: how well the proposed use of blended learning suits available resources, current perceptions, levels of leadership, and so on. Like the exercise in matching strategies and goals, the identification of issues can be an opportunity to match apparent problems with what might be, when viewed from another angle, means of solving them, even pre-empting their perception as problems.

Here are some examples:

- Is there likely to be resistance from the faculty or from department heads?

It is always best to try to address likely concerns before they are voiced. Is the issue at root a matter of unfamiliarity, of control, of workload concerns, of pedagogical viability? Each kind of concern should be addressed and ameliorated before concerns emerge as vociferous objections. Communication can go a long way in heading off likely opposition. It may be wise to enlist sensitive groups—chairs, union representatives (if the institution is a “union shop”), influential faculty, members of faculty governance—in exploratory discussions that surface concerns ahead of time. The always avoidable danger is failing to give these concerns some consideration until such time as the plan is in full implementation, and the approach is a non-negotiable fait accompli.

- Will existing infrastructure scale to accommodate increased need?

Inventorying the current technical and support infrastructure is vital. As more students and faculty begin using the course management system, online library resources, help desk, and the networks generally, will existing resources handle increased capacity? Technical glitches can cripple what would otherwise be a viable blended learning program. And the inventory must be a full accounting of personnel as well as software and hardware. Is the support staff for the online instruction already too lean and strained before the blended learning initiative begins? Then a top priority must be addressing this deficiency. Adequate infrastructure is the foundation of a campus's ability to engage in blended learning.

- How does institutional culture accommodate instruction that is not only brick and mortar?

Are there procedural barriers (e.g., special approvals) that make it difficult to change the instructional modality of a course? If so, there may need to be some bureaucratic streamlining. Is the institution's experience with online instruction restricted to a satellite program, off in a special silo? If so, there will need to be some perception management in bringing partly online instruction into the mainstream.

- Does the institution have a sense of what blended learning is?

There may be an established definition; on the other hand, there may be utter unfamiliarity. In either case, there needs to be communication and consensus-building. For blended learning to succeed, there must be clear means of identifying courses and/or programs as blended. Having everyone on the same page is

important, and may be most important of all for students, whose clear and reliable expectations of blended instruction will allow them to vote with their feet.

- Are there likely to be student concerns regarding academic quality?

As is the case with overcoming faculty resistance, it is important to be proactive in addressing concerns that are more likely to be suspicions than experienced-based fact. Is there likely to be a sense that blended courses will be easier or harder? Do students suspect they will be taught by different and less qualified faculty? Will there be any reason to worry that students in these courses are somehow shortchanged or under-supported? Not only is it imperative that these perceptions be identified, but drilling down to the core reasons for the attitude (perhaps through focus groups) would offer opportunity to determine the origins of these concerns and their possible validity; the planned implementation then can and should address these.

- Are there apparent issues with workload structures, with contractual procedures?

Most institutions determine credit hours (often also called contact hours) by “seat” time. When instructional time online displaces some of that face-to-face time, are there questions or issues about how course time is determined or attendance taken, either for the instructor or the students? This may simply mean taking into account the formidable tracking features of most course management systems. But it may entail a demanding if salutary re-examination of learning objectives and outcomes.

- Is there sufficient funding for developing, implementing, sustaining and perhaps even scaling up blended learning?

There is rarely confidence about sufficient funding for any new initiative, especially during an economic downturn, but blended learning is a special case for several reasons. First, it is an initiative with an expected ROI (or return on investment): it can produce revenue (especially through enrollment growth) as well as drain it. What’s more, unlike most online programs, blended learning targets the core student population. Depending on how it is planned and rolled out, blended learning has the potential to reach and benefit all the students, not a select constituency. It may not need special earmarked funding if it is seen as a core expense. Similarly, the plans for sustaining and scaling up blended learning may require that it show ROI to justify this.

B. Suggestions for Implementation

As the foregoing questions suggest, planning—especially truly effective, proactive planning—will shade into action items very quickly. Once action on a plan is taken, implementation is underway. Here we offer some early steps in implementation that can make the difference between success and failure.

1. Ensuring the Adequacy of Available Resources

A comprehensive support structure is one of the primary success factors. An effective support system tracks back to the mission and goals of the institution. It is not an isolated enterprise, but one that mobilizes the full range of resources. Figure 1 (below) represents the essentials of a comprehensive approach to blended learning, one that pulls together key elements for instructor support, learner support and information dissemination.

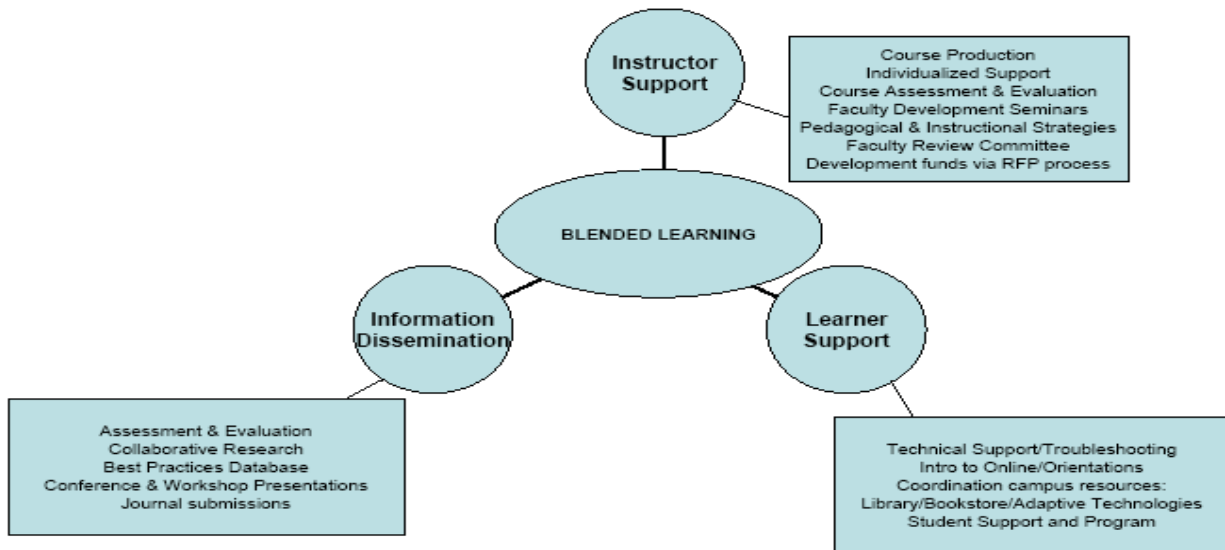


Figure 1

The details of resource management depend on circumstances that will vary greatly from one institution to the next: the role of the library in everything from access to online resources in instruction to support for information literacy/fluency for students and even professional development for faculty; the role of graduate students in instruction and/or in mediating uses of technology in instruction; the existence (or absence) of a student surcharge or technology fee in funding technological support; and so on. The point here is not to play out all the institution-specific contingencies but to stress the indispensable essentials: established policies and principles, effective communications, and assessment and evaluation procedures.

Probably the most complicated and complex issue surrounding the implementation of blended learning is how to pay for it. Institutions engaged in online instruction tend to target efforts towards new student populations—resulting in new sources of revenue. Blended initiatives focus on meeting goals designed to meet institutional needs for its existing student body. This does not necessarily result in new sources of revenue. While many institutions will look externally for funds to develop and jump-start their efforts, resources to keep it going are hard to come by. The first discussion on campus must center on the sustainability of the blended effort. Whether it is seen as a core expense or not additional resources are needed. Some strategies used include a technology fee, distribution of tuition revenue and shared resources. Senior support is essential along with pulling together financial decision makers. A resource strategy must be one of the first plans in place.

2. Clarifying Policies and Principles

Do current administrative and educational policies consider blended instruction? Do the characteristics of this teaching modality necessitate changes? Key areas to consider include program/course approval, intellectual property and copyright policy, workload and reward structures, existing evaluation practices (including standard data-gathering for institutional research), and procedures for gathering and publishing course descriptions and schedules as well as any determinants for student access to courses (screening for preparedness and other means of gauging eligibility). If these seem overwhelming, it is worth considering that the key to blended learning is effective integration: potentially, there is no kind or level of instruction it would not touch. It is not a special program needing special policies and procedures, but a different modality of mainstream instruction, and can in fact seem, now or prospectively, to *be* the new mainstream, particularly as seen in studies like “Blended Learning Enters the Mainstream” [6]. In terms

of policies and procedures, it should hew as closely to standard operating procedures as possible. Blended learning may require some tweaking of existing policies, but it should not belong to a different policy universe.

3. Providing Effective Information

Any viable blended learning initiative is going to have compelling reasons for coming into being. If it speaks to important goals, and it must, these need to be conveyed to the campus community. Everyone, potentially, is a stakeholder. This means that the dissemination of information ought to be multi-level and multi-source. The initiative should have executive sponsorship from the highest level, but it can and should have champions among the faculty, support staff, and even the students as well as the administration. Once the initiative is begun, every effort should be made to put information and resources in the hands of those who can move it forward.

It is tempting but fundamentally mistaken to think of communication about any initiative as a kind of one-shot approach, a newsletter or monthly memo. This would be a compounded mistake when it comes to blended learning, which calls for a blended approach to communication: it makes sense to proceed by face-to-face meetings and briefings, but it makes at least as much sense to provide online communication as well. As an exemplary approach to the latter aspect, any institution would be hard pressed to outdo than University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee website. The UWM site for “Hybrid Courses” (for so it calls its blended courses)—see <http://www4.uwm.edu/lte/hybrid/> —provides resources for students and faculty, rationales and goals, testimonials, and other information. Useful as it is to its intended audiences, it can give other institutions a strong sense of why an institution would engage in blended learning as well as how to communicate that to that institution's constituency.

4. Having an Effective Assessment and Evaluation Plan in Place

Too often in implementing new initiatives, planning for assessment and evaluation is an afterthought. For a blended learning initiative, it is a key feature of any effective launch, and for two compelling reasons. First, the key to validity in assessment is always to measure outcomes against goals: if these are articulated at the outset, the assessment plan has its gauge for validity; if the goals are measurable outcomes, definable by clear metrics, so much the better—assessment will be reliable as well as valid.

But the second reason may be more important still, especially for any blended learning initiative with hopes of sustainability and scalability: assessment should ideally provide a feedback loop that either validates the initiative's progress or suggests needed mid-course corrections. Is enhanced teaching and learning the goal, and, if so, is that demonstrated by learning outcomes? Is enrollment growth and increased revenue the goal, and, if so, is that trend manifested in the early trials? Are there unintended consequences that require adjustments? Are there new trends or circumstances—anything from changes in technology to changes in instruction or enrollment patterns—that need to be taken into account? Having an effective assessment plan in place is obviously critical. For detailed consideration of the shape that it should take, and the issues it should take into account, there is no better guide than a companion piece in this volume: “The Sloan-C Pillars: Boundary Objects for Evaluating Blended Learning” [7].

III. CONCLUSION: CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Particularly from an administrative perspective, no consideration of blended learning can escape the realization that there is much to consider. Its multi-faceted nature can make blended learning seem overwhelming—a hydra-headed monster, impossible to tame. But there is no reason to feel overwhelmed.

In fact, there is good reason not to: even and especially when there is much to consider, it is essential to prioritize. A few top priorities (no more than half a dozen) should rule planning and anchor procedures. Here are those priorities, those critical success factors, for blended learning:

- Matching Blended Learning to Institutional Goals (Problem-solving)

Blended learning does not have a predetermined outcome. It needs to be put in the service of an institution's mission, ideally presenting itself as a solution to a real institutional problem, a way of addressing a real institutional need.

- Matching Goals to Specific Strategies (and vice versa)

Like any complex initiative, blended learning promises multiple ramifications. Care must be taken to make sure the sought-after goals are achieved, but it is really no less important to reap the full range of benefits that any blended learning strategy promises.

- Identifying Strengths and Weakness (and Proactively Tackling the Latter)

An initiative's initial success is as likely to be about perceptions as resources. Effectively planning means overcoming unfamiliarity and resistance, enlisting engagement, bringing stakeholders on board.

- Providing Critical Support

A careful inventory of available resources is only the first step. Blended learning has pedagogy at its center, which means that faculty and students need to be adequately supported and that most of the answers to problems of support will come in the form of people, not technology.

- Ensuring Effective Communication (A Blended Approach)

Blended learning needs a multi-faceted, multi-level approach to communication, and a blended one: like the pedagogy it incarnates, the information about it needs to be disseminated both face-to-face and online. Access to that information, like access to the course content in blended courses, should be the opposite of one-shot: it should be ubiquitous, an anytime/anywhere proposition.

- Using Assessment Effectively (and Formatively)

Blended learning is a latter-day evolution of higher learning that will continue to evolve, both in its generic and institution-specific forms, both in its pedagogical and its technological aspects. It will need to be informed and reformed by on-going assessments that not only verify but improve its viability.

Administrators are sometimes accused of being all too enamored of "big-picture" perspectives. But blended learning presents a case when it is especially dangerous to lose sight of the forest for the trees. And so it is entirely right to invoke the key priorities that are critical to success while keeping the big picture in sight. After all, blended learning, on so many levels, promises a big win for the whole institution.

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