A thought experiment
Introduction

"Freedom doesn’t make it easier to create – *constraints do.*"

Taken from: https://fortheinterested.com/start/
Constraints + Support = Creativity
Constraint 1

Teaching and Learning from Home
March 30, 2020 until “at least April 10, 2020”

In just **fourteen working days**, the University of Maryland College Park shifted from an almost entirely face to face institution to one that offers courses **entirely or almost entirely online**.

This represented:

- **4,119 courses**
- **37,961 students**
- **4,870 faculty**
- **9,130 staff**
Shift in Course Modality

Over 85% of student and faculty respondents reported teaching and learning *entirely or almost entirely online* during the Fall 2020 semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduate Students</th>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall students and faculty: Overall, how would you describe the delivery of your course content this semester?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Students: Before the transition to remote learning, in what learning environment did you take your courses?</td>
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<td>Spring Faculty: Excluding the classes that transitioned to remote instruction in Spring 2020, how do you usually teach your courses?</td>
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Spring 2020  -------------------------------  Fall 2020

% Selected

N undergraduates = 3,984 | N graduates = 936 | N faculty = 1,569

% Selected

N undergraduates = 3,648 | N graduates = 922 | N faculty = 1,205
Constraint 2

Time
“It takes me almost twice as long to teach online as it does in person, because I am having to re-do preparation to shift material to an online format, and then record lectures, and then be available to students for questions during regular lecture time.

I have also taken over all of the grading from my TA, to increase the amount of interaction and feedback my students get from me and therefore mitigate some of the effects of the loss of class time.”
Constraint
3

Increased Stress
Faculty Comments

“There is a great burden put on instructional faculty. We have to learn new technology, develop online teaching skills, support our students - both on a personal level and with technology issues, take care of our other job duties, be available for our children, share spaces with other members of our households (including tech times), and find time to care for ourselves.”
Faculty Comments

"What I wasn't prepared for was the stress level of my students (and myself) juggling multiple responsibilities during a pandemic. Neither I nor they performed at our best, but we're doing okay."

"Things have gone fairly well though I am now feeling a great deal of **Zoom fatigue** and being at home all the time. I also feel quite exhausted after spending virtually all summer taking workshops, training TAs, working with other faculty to redesign courses and so forth. It feels like it's been a long haul with no breaks in sight."
For faculty, balancing family, household, and work responsibilities and managing care for relatives were more difficult in the fall compared to the spring, while maintaining teaching productivity less difficult.

Maintaining research productivity remained difficult for nearly 7 in 10 faculty in the fall.
Faculty | Well-Being by Gender

More women faculty than men reported difficulty balancing family, household, and work responsibilities and maintaining motivation for work.
Student Comments

"My mental health has gotten very bad since school started and while 2 of my professors are really understanding, it still doesn't take off any of the stress from school combined with stress from covid, and the political environment in the country right now."

"COVID-19 has been significantly impactful on me as a transfer student. I feel very isolated from my fellow classmates and instructional staff. Being new at the university, especially as an older transfer student, during the pandemic feels like a uniquely difficult experience."
A higher percentage of graduate student than undergraduate student respondents indicated that their instructors were able to help them with either personal or academic concerns or challenges.
Students | Well-being

Three in four undergraduate students and one in two graduate students expressed difficulty maintaining motivation for coursework and studying effectively in the fall.

More undergraduates than graduates reported difficulty maintaining their academic performance.
Students | Mental Health

Mental health stigma and academic demands were cited as barriers to seeking treatment to a larger percentage of undergraduate students compared to graduate students.

Note that this item was only asked of respondents who said they had considered seeking mental health resources as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but have not yet.
Supports

Access to Technology
Technology Resources

Students and faculty had the hardware and software necessary to learn and teach during the Fall 2020 semester.

Through the Student Crisis Fund, Terrapin Tech continued its laptop loan program and provision of mobile hotspots to students, faculty, and staff.
New Technological Resources
Supports

Trainings & Consultations
More faculty attended group trainings or workshops in the fall compared to the spring to support their teaching practices.

Fall: While teaching this semester, have you used any of the following resources to support your instructional goals? Select all that apply.

Spring: When preparing to learn remotely, did you use any of the following resources? (Please select all that apply)
TLTC Trainings Increased Dramatically

Area of Workshop Focus Mar to Aug 2019-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Group / Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business of Teaching</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Design</td>
<td>611</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice - Active Learning - Engagement</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
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Supports

Teaching Innovation Grants
What was funded?

The most common request was for funding for instructors to do the major lift necessary to build online courses. Here are some other categories of funding.

- **Course Design Stipends**: Instructors had a tremendous summer workload redesigning courses.
- **GA/UG Stipends**: Graduate Assistants were essential for completing the redesigns.
- **Hardware**: Video and audio equipment.
- **Software**: Virtual Reality software, library resources, and other licenses.
- **Learning Kits**: Mailing lab materials to students for hands-on learning.
- **External Consultants**: Video and webpage editing and other consultation services.
Benefits of the Grants
What came from the 285 Projects

1. Reusable Pedagogical Assets
   - Instructional videos, quiz banks, discussion boards and other materials
   - 216 Projects

2. Equity and Access
   - Focus on flexibility, empathy, accessibility
   - 35 Projects

3. Reusable Hardware and Software
   - Cameras, computers, and other tools.
   - Software for 3D modeling, music notation, simulations, and other applications
   - 89 Projects

4. Paradigm Shifts
   - Creative solutions using VR, avatars, and other cutting-edge technology
   - 18 Projects
Faculty Comments

"I am also very happy with the proactive role by the university, as a recipient of the Teaching Innovation Grant, my work on my teaching project has definitely enabled me to be a much better teacher in the online setting."
Creativity
Faculty | Course Technology

Approximately a third of faculty respondents adopted a new instructional practice during the pandemic, the most common being creating asynchronous video lectures, allowing for flexibility on deadlines, and designing open-book/open-note assignments.
Undergraduate students reported that instructors engaged in practices both to create a positive classroom climate, such as creating welcoming environments for students that were conducive to learning, and easing the burden of navigating multiple online experiences.

Over 70% of undergraduate students indicated that they hope that their instructors continue to engage in most course management-related instructional practices in the future.
Most effective online transition

Students reported that courses that made the most effective online transition had **open communication with the instructor and clear expectations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least effective transition course</th>
<th>Most effective transition course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>68%</td>
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<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>43%</td>
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<td>47%</td>
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Still thinking about the ONE course that you felt made the LEAST/MOST EFFECTIVE TRANSITION to remote learning, please rate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. For the course you have in mind, after the course transitioned online.
Panopto

Typically there were over 6,000 more hours of Panopto lectures delivered per day in Spring 2021 compared to Spring 2020. This represents 291,006 hours of lectures and 33 years of use.)
There has been a total of **over 343,000 meeting hours** held within the platform representing **39 years of meeting time** since January 25, 2021.
Please select which statement best reflects your level of ELMS-Canvas literacy

Faculty
- Beginner: 5%
- Newcomer: 1%
- Unfamiliar: 1%
- Did not use ELMS-Canvas: 1%
- Average: 38%
- Advanced: 43%
- Expert: 13%

Students
- Beginner: 1%
- Newcomer: 1%
- Unfamiliar: 1%
- Did not use ELMS-Canvas: 1%
- Average: 20%
- Advanced: 40%
- Expert: 38%

N = 485

N = 4,482
Looking Ahead
Conclusions

Educators are constrained by many factors

1. Training
2. University and departmental policies
3. Curricular goals
4. Semesters
5. Enrollments
Our Challenge

1. Choose a set of constraints for your work
2. Set parameters for your vision
3. Establish rules for what you will and won’t do
4. Pin yourself in
5. Find your frame

Taken from: https://fortheinterested.com/start/
ITL Sessions on Innovations

Today:
- Creative Assessment Strategies
- Leveraging Technology to Support Experiential Courses
- Engaging Learners in Classes Big and Small

Tomorrow:
- Keynote: Promoting New Learning Experiences at UMD
- Becoming an Anti-Racist Educator
- Designing for Accessible and Equitable Learning

Register: https://itlconference.umd.edu/