

ACCSC

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

Spotlight on Excellence

Special Edition

There's an App for That! **The Creation of a Health Screening App is Helping to Keep Training Moving Forward**

By Sarah Hamilton

Director of Media & Communications
Stanbridge University - Irvine, CA and Anaheim, CA

In planning for the safe return of students and staff to campus for essential labs Stanbridge University's IT team developed Campus Screen, a mobile application to help screen COVID-19 symptoms. The app, which went through rigorous health application testing before approval by Apple and Google, is available to both iPhone and Android users for free. It allows students and staff to prescreen for common COVID-19 symptoms before arriving on campus and was modeled off a successful Harvard Medical School Disease Transmission Prevention Program in Boston.

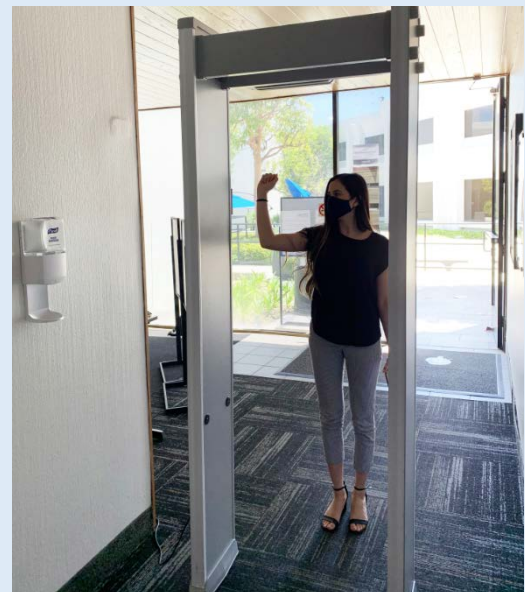


Campus Screen is a user-friendly, easy to navigate, app that asks students a series of questions pertaining to COVID-19 guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control. Based on responses, users will receive either a green-colored day pass for 12 hours to be on campus, a yellow-colored message to stay home and contact a healthcare provider, or a red-colored message to seek medical care immediately.

Once on-campus, students and staff are required to pass through a contactless, walk-through, thermal temperature scanner, which is located at each entrance. Once their temperature is scanned, they are required to show their Day Pass to the in-person monitor to be cleared to enter. The process is designed to be a quick and efficient access protocol and is required at every building entrance.

In addition to the app and temperature scanner, the following policies have been put in place:

1. Use of UV cleaning, Nanoseptic self-cleaning surfaces, and ionized nanoparticle cold fogging machines to sanitize buildings as well as increased janitorial cleaning rotations
2. Universal face masking requirements
4. Plexiglass protective sneeze shields at all screening stations with immediate access to PPE at all entrances
5. Sanitizing stations at each entrance, exit, and throughout campus
6. Designated one-way building entrance and exit points with in-person monitors
7. Social distancing measures in classrooms, labs, and communal areas including modified layouts where necessary. Additionally, wall mounted infra-red temperature scanners are installed in all labs.
8. Additional 24/7 concierge student mental health support, provided by Care Solace, to assist with access to services including those facing mental health issues relating, but not limited to, COVID-19.



9. Enhanced virtual support to assist students with Student Services including the Stanbridge Tutoring App to schedule virtual peer and faculty tutoring.

Stanbridge University's priority is to ensure students' access to education and continuing forward towards graduation is uninterrupted yet safe in accordance with federal, state, and local health care directives. The development of this app, as well as on-campus safety guidelines, help ensure that Stanbridge can continue to train the next generation of healthcare leaders.

Stanbridge University has made the app available to any academic or other institution to download freely and is pleased to share any additional information as needed.

Not All Superheroes Wear Masks – Some Make Them!

By Matthew Madrid

Campus President

Platt College – Riverside, California

Today, as we stand in our socially-distant lines to shop Target, Home Depot, Walmart, and the like, one can't help but notice the vast variety of protective face masks – masks that tout such fashion designers as Louis Vuitton, popular television shows like *The Walking Dead*, and favorite sports teams like the L.A. Angeles and L.A. Kings. They're literally everywhere. And while graphic face masks are a brand new phenomenon, it's hard to believe that in mid-March (which may seem like eons ago to some), masks were in short supply and authorities were pleading with those who could sew to make masks in an effort to save the medical-grade masks for the frontline workers.

Jonette Yazzie, a medical assisting and medical administrative specialist instructor at Platt College Riverside answered the call. With the help of her neighbors, Yazzie coordinated the construction and sewing of dozens of masks for not only her friends and family, but for the essential workers at her local Stater Bros. Market. "When we learned that essential workers at Stater Bros. did not have the protective gear they needed to keep them safe, we went right to work," stated Yazzie. "To us, it seemed the least we could do for them and, in the process, it truly bonded us as neighbors. I also believe in a small way working together seemed to help each of us with our own mental outlook during this trying time."



Jonette Yazzie at her sewing machine with part of "her village" making masks.

But Yazzie didn't stop there. She went on to create and donate dozens of homemade masks (each taking approximately 30 minutes to construct) to Moreno Valley's homeless after learning of the dire need on Facebook.

Some would say Yazzie was built for the challenge of making masks. As a young child in the late 1950s, Yazzie grew up on a homestead in Alaska. A decade later, the family moved to the Navajo reservation in Northern Arizona. "For us, if you wanted new clothes, you went to the fabric box, picked a piece of fabric and made it yourself. We were quite good at being self-sufficient and making the most of what we had."



Jonette Yazzie (left) delivering masks to Stater Bros.

Yazzie sums it up like this ... "As an educator, I look at this situation we're in right now, this pandemic, the way I look at education. No one gets to graduation on their own. It truly takes a village – instructors, librarians, admissions reps, career services experts, administrators and the list goes on and on. "Right now we need that village, each doing their part – big or small – to make things better. This, I believe, is how we will get through this."

Jonette Yazzie is a medical assisting and medical administrative specialist instructor at Platt College Riverside. In her free time, Jonette enjoys sewing, redoing her house, and working in her yard, as well as

Teaching Students to Bend and Flex During a Pandemic

By Brad Janis

Campus President

Platt College – Anaheim, California

It goes without saying that the global pandemic has forced us all to bend and flex in ways we never dreamed. And while the last few months have not been easy for anyone, for Platt College Anaheim's Lila Riesen, bending and flexing are things she, literally and figuratively, teaches as the college's health and fitness trainer program instructor.

"My students are taught, from day one, to listen to their clients, make careful and thoughtful assessments, and from there develop specialized plans to meet clients' ongoing needs and help them reach their goals. It's all about learning to adapt to the circumstances to achieve a desired outcome," said Riesen. Riesen's 15-month associate degree program began in March 2019. A year later, like most schools, Platt College Anaheim's programs, including its health and fitness trainer program, transitioned to a remote learning format. "The health and fitness trainer program is conducive to an online format and my students absolutely embraced remote instruction." As a testament to Riesen's online teaching success with students, by the end of the program in late May, every student had successfully completed the "classroom" portion of the program.

Then came the externship.

As we know, the COVID-19 pandemic presented – and continues to present – unique challenges for all schools. After all, externships and clinicals involve hands-on, on-site learning – two facets of the externship that are seemingly off limits these days. "Externships are all about venturing out of the classroom, one-on-one learning and truly putting the student's hard skills and soft skills to the test, said Riesen. "The issue at hand was how to successfully rethink the critical externship component, given the current restrictions, so students could continue on their academic paths and successfully complete the program," said Riesen.

With a bit of bending and flexing herself, Riesen rose to the challenge and carefully planned every step of the externship which included:

1. Online shadowing of the externship instructor's classes three days a week
2. Online programming and mock client intake interviewing
3. Online programming and student teaching
4. Online (instructor-monitored) personal training with an actual client

"While I understand that students would have preferred to complete their externship under the guidance of a gym owner, the reality is that it may be months before any of us are allowed back into a gym. We are facing extraordinary circumstances which call for extraordinary measures," said Riesen. "Just like in a workout, you may show up and realize you don't have the equipment you need. The mark of a good instructor is one that can improvise on short notice without showing a trace of panic. I believe the students got a real lesson in 'thinking outside the box' and that anything is possible when you put your mind to it – despite the circumstances."

Lila Riesen is a NASM Certified Personal Trainer (CPT), NESTA Certified Personal Trainer (CPT), NASM Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES), NASM Fitness Nutrition Specialist (FNS), NASM Corrective Exercise Specialist (CES) and NASM Group Fitness Instructor (GFI).



Lila Riesen

Putting Respiratory Therapy Students Front and Center During the Pandemic

By Daryl Goldberg

Interim Campus President

Platt College – Ontario, California

As we all know, COVID-19 has put respiratory therapists front and center – something John Ynami has not only personally experienced as a working respiratory therapist (RT) during this time of pandemic but has also done as an RT instructor at Platt College Ontario. “Since all schools, including Platt College Ontario, have transitioned to remote learning, finding a way to deliver the hands-on laboratory instruction, an essential part of any RT program, has been challenging for all educators,” explained John. “Challenging, but not impossible.”

“My students were anxious to continue their academics despite the pandemic. In fact, the pandemic seemed to fuel their desire to help others,” said John, a respiratory therapist who has been working weekends to fill the need for RTs at Redlands Community Hospital in Redlands, California. “At the end of the day, this is exactly what my RT students signed up for. I felt it was up to us to find a way to enable our students to continue on their educational paths despite the circumstances.”

John and his RT program director Bob Wandel (also an RT) got creative with the laboratory portion of the program and devised a plan to set up a working lab in the Ontario campus parking lot two days a week. With his table/lectern at the front of the parking lot, students are able to observe lab demonstrations from the socially distant safety of their cars.

According to John, here’s how it works, “I teach and demonstrate certain techniques, like a nasotracheal suctioning on our mannequin. One at a time, students get out of their cars and practice the technique on the mannequin using their own single-use, disposable suction equipment. In between students, I disinfect the mannequin according to CDC guidelines, and then the next student approaches the mannequin.”



As John explains, “We took our inspiration from drive-in church services – kind of a 1950s throwback, as well as an effective makeshift solution that churches are using today in response to the pandemic. Students are able to maintain social distance from their cars, as well as see and hear the ‘preacher,’ which, in this case, is me.”

So how are the labs working so far? Well, according to John, every one of his RT students is on track to successfully complete the class.

“I am proud to say that each of my students is anxious to complete the program and to ultimately work as a respiratory therapist in a time when the world needs them most,” stated John.

College and Career Readiness: A Journey with the Perfect Guide

By Dr. David Scott

Campus Director

IntelliTec College - Colorado Springs, Colorado

Students attend our college to learn the skills to be successful in the workplace. But we have found that making them ready to be successful students first put them on a more sure path to success. So, we developed our College and Career Readiness as the first course that all students take when they start any program at IntelliTec College. This six-week intensive course provides instruction and demonstration to enhance professional life and work skills such as; Stress Management, Effective Study Skills, Time Management, Leadership, Team Building, Critical Thinking, Financial Literacy, Diversity and Conflict Resolution, and Overcoming Road Blocks to Success.

But, putting students on the path is not enough – they need a guide and we have Mr. Kyle Gilliam. Mr. Gilliam is a 21 year educator and he is our College and Career Readiness Instructor. He feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in numerous diverse settings alongside amazing students of all ages and backgrounds. His educational journey includes an extraordinary opportunity to live and teach on the Navajo Indian Reservation, to lead both youth and adult scholars as a teacher and leader in both public and private educational institutions. Mr. Gilliam's mission is to inspire individuals to see the value in learning and growing and to help foster courage and confidence as students prepare for their college and career experiences.



February 24th, 2020 was the launch of our new College and Career Readiness initiative and three weeks in it was mandated that all students move to online educational delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But pandemic or not we received an overwhelming positive response to the 60+ students that attended this specific course. Upon successful completion of this course, not only did we have an overwhelming reaction from students of how well Mr. Gilliam led this course, they all stated how excited they were about their educational journey. They stated how they felt confident and prepared to engage in the classroom and lab setting, even though they didn't know when they would be able to return to the campus learning environment. But, the timing of our College and Career Readiness course was perfect because it addresses challenges our students may face and gives them innovative and exciting ways to meet those challenges head on and to overcome them. Mr. Gilliam's approach to the immediate move to online instruction, having to deal with the unknown and how he handled the entire situation was exemplary and in fact served as a great example of how to adjust, adapt, and overcome.



The student centered approach in our College and Career Readiness course begins the very first day of class by having each student create a balance wheel that identifies where in their lives they have strengths and weaknesses. Soft skills are introduced allowing students to create a healthy balance for their lives that leads to career and personal success. Next, leaders from each department at the college teach modules in this course so that students are able to develop connections and know what resources are available to them. Financial

Services comes in to teach about financial literacy and budgeting. Career Services teaches them how to create a portfolio including their cover letter, resume, and develop their interviewing skills.

We teach our students about how to find the “Why Behind their Want” and how to keep that in the forefront of their minds for consistent personal motivation. The Campus Director teaches the students about how to make, keep, and adjust goals throughout their program and lives. These concepts along with many others are used in conjunction with our learning and support resources to holistically support our students personally and educationally needs. It’s absolutely amazing to see the change that takes place in each and every student throughout the progression of this course. Students are better prepared to move on to their programs and have every tool needed to be successful.

Mr. Gilliam’s unique delivery methods are incorporated seamlessly into the innovative design of the College and Career Readiness curriculum and include engaging and interactive projects bringing a new outlook on preparing our students for college and life. Students end the course with a Gallery Walk where they present their Vision Boards to staff and faculty. We have had so many wonderful comments about Mr. Gilliam’s instructional methods that we could not keep track of them all.



IntelliTec College is proud of its new Collegee and Course Readiness course and is honored to have Mr. Gilliam at the helm. We cannot speak highly enough about his ability to engage our students while keeping them motivated to learn regardless of the environment or unforeseeable future of when students will be able to return to campus. Together with the innovation and student-centered approach of this course, we are thrilled with seeing the increased retention, motivation, and inspiration provided to not only students, but also to faculty and staff alike.

A Trade School Story of Adaptation and Innovation

By Jens Lee

Communications and Marketing Manager

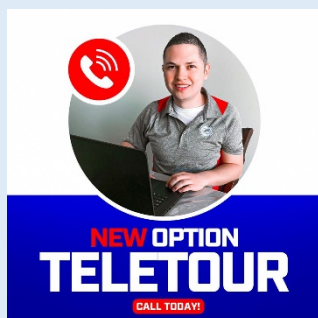
Perry Technical Institute – Yakima, Washington

When Washington State Governor Jay Inslee issued the Stay at Home, Stay Safe order that mandated the closure of all K-12 and higher education facilities effective March 17, Perry Tech went to work transitioning the 740 students across 13 programs to online-only instruction. As an applied learning school, much of the teaching is in a hands-on lab setting so the announcement did indeed initially present some challenges. The school has, however, successfully transitioned to online-only instruction using the Microsoft Teams software platform.

Tasked with training and equipping the essential faculty for instruction, the IT staff at Perry worked tirelessly to ensure that all instructors and students were able to connect online. Josh Phillips, Director of Information Technology said, "I'm really proud of our IT team here at Perry Tech. They quickly facilitated the transition from onsite to online learning, by providing the resources and platform needed to continue training for our students. Additionally, they developed training videos and provided ongoing support for our students to continue with instruction." The online platform has allowed for instruction to continue, and instructors are able to deliver lecture and demonstrations very similar to what would take place if students were on campus. "The online platform seems to be working the best it can, given the circumstances," stated Garet Gasseling, Associate Dean of Education, Academic Support Services.

For Perry Tech, the online platform has been an excellent tool to suit the school's needs, but it does have its limitations for an institution who mainly offers hands-on programming. In the early weeks of instruction, as a new quarter just started, things have run pretty well due to the theory intense approach at the beginning of most programs. However, as the school transitions deeper in the quarter, instructors are being challenged to find creative ways to lead their lab instruction. "One shining example is in our HVAC/R program where one instructor leads students through lab exercises using their home HVAC systems via video conferencing," stated Nathan Hull, Dean of Education. Strategically, the school has shifted up the theory portions where possible in the instructional schedule in order to delay the lab specific courses. The decision to move scheduling is an innovative approach to flex the status quo until students can resume on-campus labs. This adjustment is seen as critical for programs such as welding, construction and automotive where lab instruction is an intense component of the program.

Of course the best barometer of measurement for how effective all of this is are the students. Hull adds, "The majority of our students seem to be adapting very well. While the vast majority understand and accept things for what they are right now as we all do our best in the interest of public health and safety, some have made it clear that they look forward to returning to the hands-on learning environment that Perry provides."



Outside of instruction, Perry Tech has successfully transformed the front office as well in an effort to continue providing the highest quality ancillary services. For example, during normal operating conditions the school requires that prospective students tour their select program. Since that is not an option, Admissions staff developed the ability to provide informational TeleTours for candidates to connect with admissions and faculty in order to meet the requirement. Once the candidate completes a tour they are then able to schedule their entrance exam. To further demonstrate our ability to innovate, Enrollment staff have developed the capability and are offering

prospect the ability to Utilize Zoom chat/messaging software, where exam center staff are able to proctor the exam remotely.

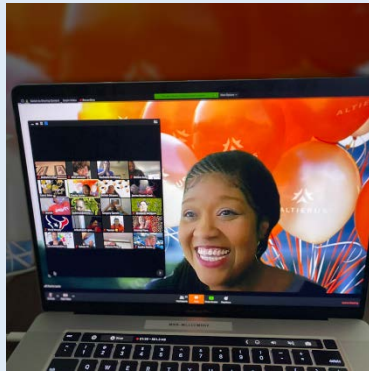
“All things considered, I am very proud of what our school has accomplished given the current situation,” stated Christine Côté, President of Perry Technical Institute. Côté continued, “The silver lining in all of this is that in the face of adversity we know that we have the ability to adapt and develop innovative solutions for providing quality instruction while minimizing disruptions in our students’ remote learning. By coming together as a faculty and staff for the students, I have no doubt that we will be a better organization in the future through all of this.”

Relying on Innovation and Ingenuity During the Pandemic

By Jennifer Erpelding, Ph.D.

Vice President, Academic Affairs
Alterius Career Colleges

Over the past three years, Alterius engaged in the process of transforming all aspects of the training model and student experience. Little did we know, we were preparing for an unexpected shock to the system brought on by COVID-19. Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, our campuses were fully blended, meaning our students spent a portion of their time in the lab doing hands-on work and a portion of their time learning remotely. This included providing each new Alterius student with an iPad upon enrollment to facilitate the blended learning model and enable them to complete assignments and stay connected to faculty and classmates. Our intended pursuit was to set a new standard for student success and outcomes; but during this pandemic, the work ultimately has become critical to just being able to continue operating—and more meaningfully, to keeping students on their educational paths. Our proactive innovation efforts put us in a position of strength to help us weather this storm.



Successfully navigating the crisis largely depended on ingenuity of our faculty and staff. Like so many other schools, in March we closed our campus buildings. Staff quickly worked in a plan to offer a ‘drive thru’ at each campus so that new students could safely pick up course materials, supplies, and iPads to transition their coursework fully online. Teaching 100 percent remotely was new for many of our faculty. Our transition to full distance education utilized tools that students and staff were already familiar with which made the transition much smoother. However, it did not eliminate the need for swift training. Students and staff needed to quickly familiarize themselves with Zoom, the web conferencing application we chose to deliver the synchronous class sessions. Through training and demonstration, students and staff learned how to access and utilize Zoom and other courseware on their iPads, as they typically used desktop computers on campus. By recognizing the different issues that could arise, we were able to support our students by circumventing potential roadblocks to learning.

Throughout this transition, we realized it is extremely important to encourage and embrace creativity when it comes to curriculum delivery in a remote environment. During the initial weeks of virtual learning, we saw amazing ingenuity among our staff and faculty as they sought to help ensure our students were able to continue their education by meeting outcomes and achieving their professional goals. Faculty were challenged to convert hands-on classroom labs into quality lab activities that students could complete from home. Some relied on the use of virtual simulations to help students practice hands-on activities. For example, faculty in our dental assisting program set up a digital ‘chairside tray preparation’ through simulation. Faculty were able to explain the process step-by-step via zoom using the simulation and then allow students to log into the simulation independently and perform the competency check. Nursing faculty set up simulated nursing clinic visits to fulfill some clinical hours. Students were presented with individual case scenarios and conversations, interactions, and case study documentation were completed in simulations and in our LMS. Since all Allied Health



students need to complete CPR Training, we implemented blended CPR training so students could complete the lecture and simulation-based portion from home, followed by a hands-on session when returning to campus.



Many other program faculty turned to simulation or virtual labs provided by our textbook publishers or software development companies. Where simulations could not be arranged, faculty turned to even more creative ways to teach. In the HVAC trades program, some faculty disassembled and reassembled their own in-home HVAC systems and Zone Control systems live over zoom. Many of our adjunct faculty are still working in the field and one completed an install of a residential system via zoom for his students to watch. Faculty in the Medical Assisting program demonstrated blood draws, blood pressure readings, and immunization injections on able and willing family members. Students in the Pharmacy Technician program are required to prepare a prescription for the provider's signature. This paper assignment was integrated into Nearpod, our interactive learning technology, using the draw-it option and the activity was converted to a tech-check-tech group activity that can be

assessed individually by the instructor live via a zoom class lesson. Students in the Dental Assisting program receive typodonts upon enrollment and they were able to use these remotely to practice tooth numbering. Our academic team will continue to look for new ways to temporarily fulfill hands-on demonstration, practice, and evaluation through distance education.

In keeping with our mission to improve student outcomes, the campuses have done everything they can to help students remain engaged and on track with their career goals. We deliver weekly satisfaction surveys to students with results indicating overwhelming confidence in our faculty's preparedness for their online lessons. We cannot deliver all of our competencies online and it is clear that we are not out of the crisis yet; therefore, continuing to empower our faculty to be innovative and creative will be critical in our continued navigation of this pandemic.

How the Covid-19 Pandemic Led to Improvements in Best Practices and Student Experiences

By Mark Quinn

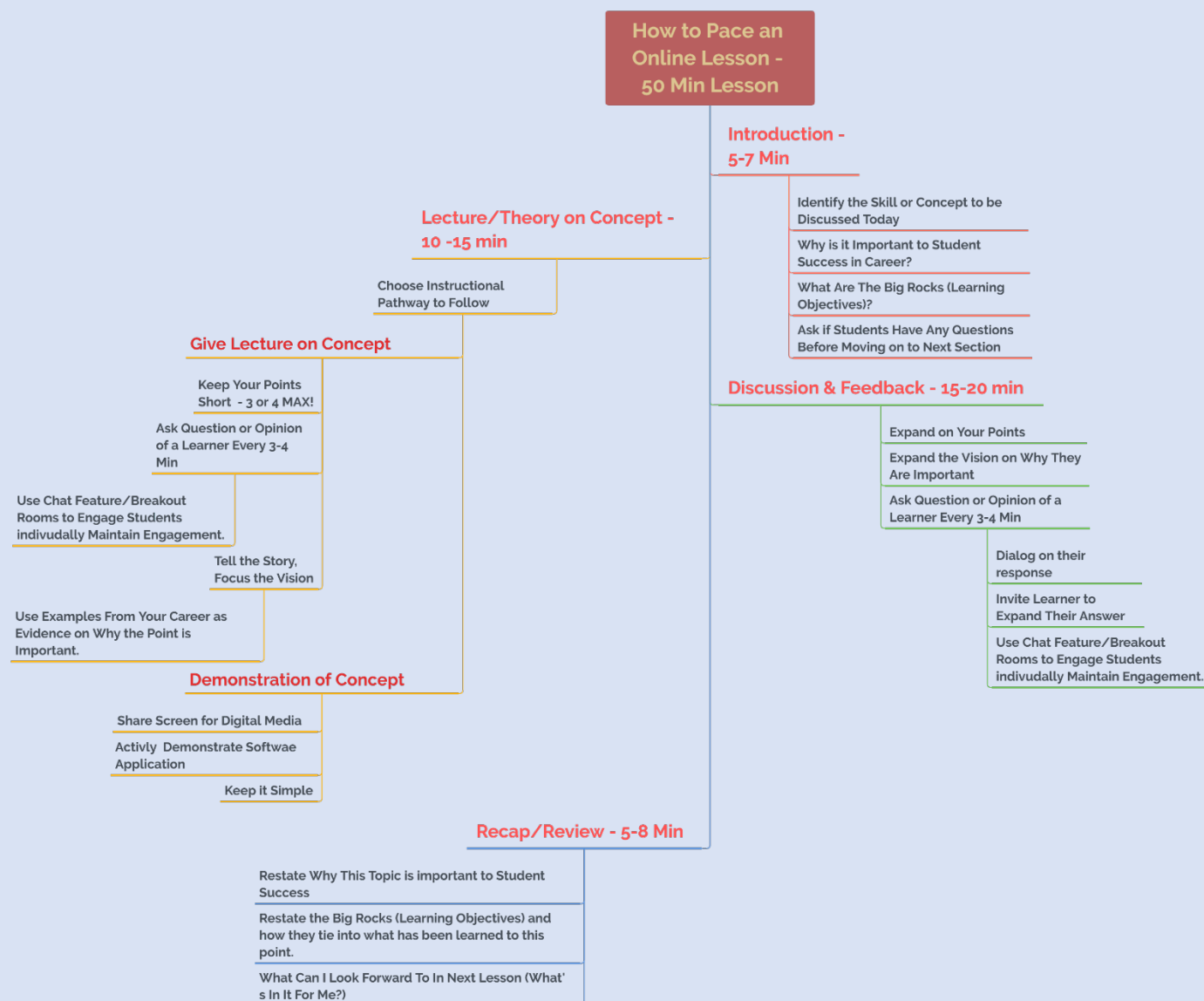
Manager of Curriculum

Ohio/Illinois/Colorado/Miami Media Schools

In March of 2020, it became clear that the Covid-19 Pandemic was going to continue to grow and impact daily operations at all 7 of our campus locations across the nation; and our company was going to have to radically change its ways of operation in order to continue to provide the high quality experience our students have experienced for over 30 years.

The Transition to Virtual Instruction:

Implementing virtual instruction of a hands-on program by substitution of a talking head lecture was not an option. The Education Department began a professional development that carefully reviewed the accreditation and pedagogical guidelines of what comprises high quality educational experience and how that can be implemented within a Zoom portal environment:



The mandatory instructor professional development continued to focus upon building relationships; we reviewed [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) and [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) using plain English, bypassing educational jargon; and sharing simple applications that instructors could apply quickly as part of the lesson pacing shown above.

Additional development that was implemented included:

- Implemented deeper training on the Zoom portal so that instructors could deal with Zoom Bombers and disruptive students quickly and efficiently so that instructional progress was not compromised.
- Developed procedures that captured accurate student attendance virtually as we could no longer use physical sign in sheets.
- We also trained our campus education department members to observe across the entire company.
 - This allowed us to monitor the classrooms for both student and instructor issues and allow us to take corrective action quickly; often within minutes of the issue taking place.
- Development of What'sApp channels to allow back channel communication between instructional teams as well as campus and national leadership. These channels have been invaluable for allowing a wide range of communication

This development was completed not a moment too soon as we were forced to implement these virtual classrooms 3 weeks later when shelter in place orders were issued in our campus locations.

Going Live in 3, 2, 1...

Implementation of classes required that we centralize our scheduling of classes and instructors from individual campus locations to regions and groups. We grouped our 7 campuses as follows:

- a. Miami/Chicago
- b. Lombard/Denver
- c. All 3 Ohio campuses: Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati

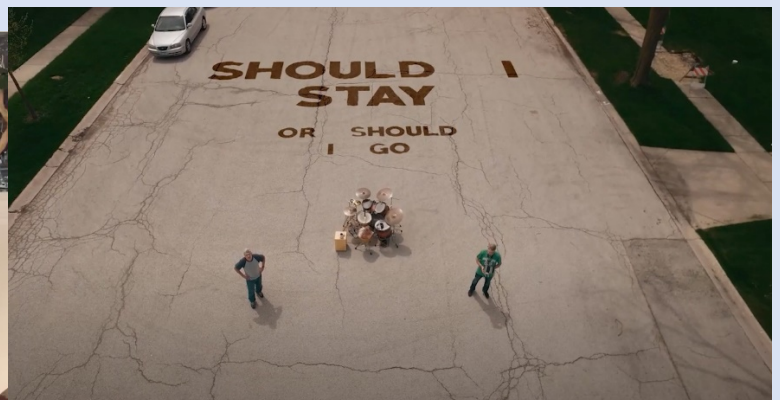
Our curriculum is designed to allow very flexible grouping and we were able to develop a national schedule approach that allowed us to schedule the best available instructor from anywhere in the country to teach what they were the strongest at teaching. This streamlined not only the instructional process but also addressed availability issues with instructors who are professional broadcasters working to cover an unprecedented and ongoing global issue.



This change allowed us to organize mandatory ongoing weekly professional development at a national level using Zoom as a meeting site for each of the 3 groups. [This along with using What'sApp as a place to showcase student work under the concept of "What Makes You Proud" has raised awareness of best practices and the instructors are implementing them more quickly than under traditional professional development training.](#)

Examples of submissions include the following student projects that were all completed in a remote environment:

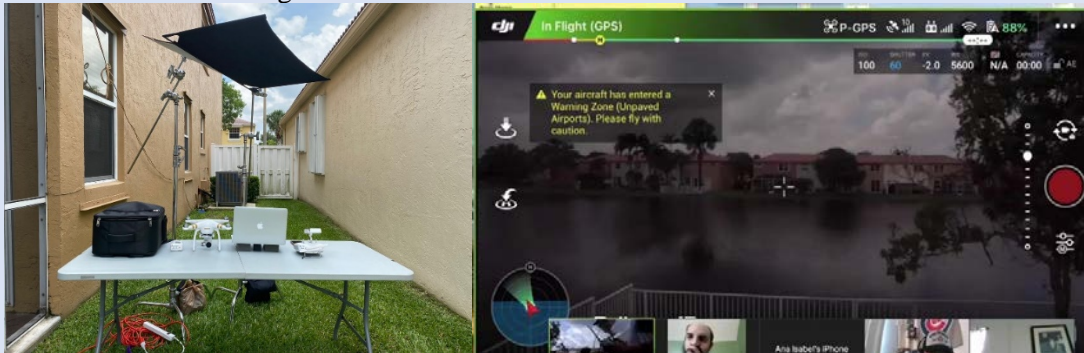
[Music Video Production – Should I Stay or Should I Go – An outstanding video that includes the use of drones.](#)





Our instructors have been amazing in developing innovative and creative ways to use the technology at our disposal to bring the curriculum alive over a virtual space, examples include:

- Tom Moroniak teaches TV control room and has created an environment that allows students to take control of the computer at his campus and edit on the Tricaster video editor remotely.
- Carlos Sande teaches drone instruction and created a demonstration that allows him to fly a drone live over Zoom and show the drones flight camera returns live as he narrates his instruction.



Using Simulations to Promote Student's Work on a National Level

Our curriculum has a segment called the Network Simulation that combines elements of 3 different classes into a simulation that creates capstone project that are then posted on a [nationally promoted website called the Be On Air News Network](#).



What Do the Students Think?

Students take a virtual survey each week that asks 3 things:

1. What did I learn this week?
2. Why is this important to me?
3. How will I use this information moving forward?

Students are very positive concerning these changes. Our attendance has improved vs before the shelter in place orders. As some of our locations are now opening, we are structuring our lessons over Zoom for lecture and having students coming to the campus to complete lab hours and internship hours. Students are taking advantage of the virtual groupings and networking with instructors and other students from other markets in a way that could not have been done when we were operating as individual schools.

Our national education team continues to observe on a weekly basis all facets of the virtual classrooms. We plan to continue elements of this approach as we return to the new normal. Despite the challenges this pandemic presented, our company has improved the student experience, provided a way to share student work on a national basis for potential employers to see and streamlined internal operations in many ways.

How a Pandemic Gave Birth to a New Forum

By Jean Gonzalez, President & Christine Mantyla, Supervisor of Admissions
South Coast College - Orange, California

After the exhilaration of being able to convert our legal profession program overnight into an online program as a result of having the Office 365 Teams already in place, the realization soon set in that South Coast College's curricula was for the way we were and not for the new emerging reality. How do we find out how things are being done in the new reality? The consensus was that we had to find out more about what was happening foremost in the legal professions where most of our students are preparing to enter. We knew we needed to ask for help from those outside the school for insight into how the roles of our students were going to be impacted as a result of the changes that were necessitated by COVID. We and our students needed a glimpse of the new reality.

For the kick-off of our new information collecting initiative, we invited a judge and an attorney who has hired many South Coast College paralegal graduates to speak on how they were coping with COVID. We also invited the President of NALA, a professional association for legal assistants, and the President of NCRA, a professional court reporting association, for any insights that they might have for our students. We reached out to our alumni and other stakeholders in the legal profession and made the forum open to students who wished to participate on zoom. For cyber-security purposes, we provided links to the meeting on an invitation basis only. For students who did not want to be in the forum itself but wanted to have access to the forum, we placed a link on the South Coast College Facebook page to allow them to view afterwards.



The first meeting was so successful that it gave birth to a weekly legal forum. People started emailing asking to be invited and asking to participate as speakers with a list of topics on which they would like to speak! One such request to attend was from our alumnae, twins who own a deposition agency in Southern California. They explained that a hot industry topic was how to use technology to transform your business during COVID, and we invited them to speak on their experience in dealing with the COVID situation.

As agency owners, they experienced first-hand the devastating impact that the court reporting field encountered when the legal profession came to a screeching halt in Southern California with no depositions being taken. After the initial shock set in, they decided like many of our other court reporting graduates, that to survive, they had to re-educate themselves by learning how to do remote depositions using technology. But that was not enough, after they invested in the new technology, they had to convince attorneys to start doing remote depositions. They told how they had to handle every objection that the attorneys made to remote depositions:

Objection: The witness doesn't have a computer.

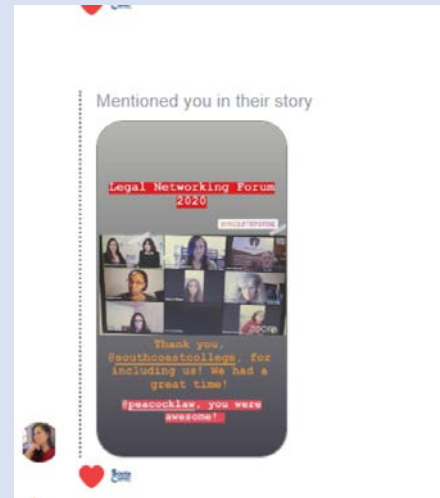
Response: We will send them an iPad or computer with a return address envelop provided.

Objection: The witness is afraid of computers.

Response: We will have someone come out, sanitize the area to be used before the deposition, show the deponent what to do, and sanitize afterwards.

Finally, they had to deal with the unspoken objection. The attorneys did not know how to do remote depositions. They had to conduct “how to” sessions for the attorneys.

The response from the virtual community was that it wanted to hear more and the virtual sessions that followed included cyber-security, using Office 365, and dealing with the new normal after COVID. A prominent legal trial attorney in Orange County recently spoke on how the legal profession and businesses in general are posturing ready to deal with the aftermath of COVID. Two other alumni agencies owners also joined as speakers. After several sessions, many observers noted how important a role the court reporter has played in the survival of the legal industry in California.



What take-aways arise from the Legal Forum endeavor?

1. Attorneys and court reporters learn from one another.
2. Students see that attorneys and judges are real people, lessening the intimidation of working with them in the future.
3. Students know that the professions that they are entering are respected professions.
4. Students learn the importance of keeping up with changes in technology.
5. Students find out that successful alumni are not so different from themselves.
6. Court reporting students benefit because they will learn how to do online depositions in their deposition procedures class as South Coast College knows that it is now part of the new reality in court reporting.

So, we realized that the pandemic gave us, and in some ways forced us, to look for new opportunities and to think beyond our pre-conceived limitations. Through this we have learned and grown and improved.