

“Interact with Your Students” Transcript

JOHN FIZEL: Hi, I’m John Fizel, Penn State’s iMBA Program which is Penn State’s online MBA Program. If I were to look at one competency in a new faculty coming to teach online the main thing is dedication to the student and wanting to interact with them. Because with the online, you’re going to have discussion formats where you’re going to be interacting, you’re going to be interacting with email and most importantly is that you have a student from afar and the most important thing to them is that they want to know you’re there. And to be there that means you have to interact and that interaction takes time; it takes effort, and probably extends your day well beyond your resident instruction. So if I’m looking for the number one thing is you have to have that commitment to the student and the interest in interacting with the student.

INTERVIEWER: So this is not a passive environment where I put stuff up and I sort of let them work through it and they’ll get to me when they’ve got a question?

JOHN FIZEL: No, if you come and create a passive environment, you’re going to lose the students and students are going to lose their educational opportunity. It really requires being active to do it well and it’s exciting to be interactive because not only are the students learning more, as they go along you’re learning more. And if you think online you lose your personality, you’re wrong. Because of this interaction your personality becomes more of a focal point in online education than it does in resident education.

INTERVIEWER: John, I’ve heard faculty say that they’ve had to go through sort of a transitional experience from what they do in a classroom to the online. Have you experienced that as well, that there’s a period of adjustment from one to the other?

JOHN FIZEL: Absolutely, you have to adjust and I think the things that you adjust to are primarily preparation. And by preparation is pre-class preparation in terms of really defining your objectives, really having a syllabus that’s laid out completely in terms of scheduling so the students know when they have to be

there or not be there. You don't have the flexibility to walk into a class one day and say, "Oh, tomorrow we're not going to do this." Well they're going to do it and they've got to do it on their time so you have to be able to adapt what you do to their time which really means better organization, better planning, more upfront work and that's hard. The second thing is that I find that when we do resident instruction, we actually can get lazy and we still can do a good job. When you're doing online, you can't. Not only do you have to be more organized, you also have to be better planned and you have to be better prepared and you have to be more interactive, you've got to do all of these things. If you get done with an online course, after you teach your first online course, you're going to improve both your online course and your resident course because you're really going to learn what is important; you're really going to learn what you have to do to fulfill those objectives. And so in a sense I think an online course helps you pare the fat out of a residency course and it's phenomenal to see how poor your residency course can be and come across as good, but after you get in the online course you go, "Oh my goodness, there are a lot of changes I have to make."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That's pretty exciting for faculty to go through that experience.

JOHN FIZEL: They don't believe it upfront but they get through the one course and it's immediately apparent.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Thank you.

Direct Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8sJIUVd8B8>