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Adapting to COVID-19: The Technology Toolkit (Main Session)
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Pan Luo – Guest Expert
Troy Welch – Guest Expert

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Opening

Ian Linkletter:

Welcome, everybody. My name's Ian Linkletter, and today I'm leading an Adapting to COVID-19 session with BCcampus. We've been doing a number of these on Fridays, and today's is all about the technology toolkit.

Ian Linkletter:

Like I said, I'm Ian Linkletter, from UBC. I work in the faculty of education as a learning technology specialist, and today I'm joined by three expert guests, who I'll introduce in just a second. We have been using an Etherpad document throughout our sessions, which is linked here at the bottom left, bit.ly/bccampuscommunity, and if you wish to tweet about this, you can also use [#bccampuscommunity](#).

Ian Linkletter:

The point of this session, the technology toolkit, is we're going to have two breakout rooms, which I'll describe in a moment, and the idea is that we're capacity-building here in BC for the upcoming term. We want faculty and students to be aware of how to use community tools, and we want technologists and IT professionals to be able to support those tools and support those faculty.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Ian Linkletter:

Now, let's start with territorial acknowledgement.

Duane Seibel:

Okay, and please feel free in the chat area to acknowledge what territory you are Zooming in from. Our key facilitator Ian today is in Vancouver, the traditional lands of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam Nations.

Ian Linkletter:

Yeah, and BCcampus joins us from Victoria, so that's the -

Duane Seibel:

Go ahead. I'm sorry. The Lekwungen people, Songhees, Esquimalt Nations, and Saanich. Thank you.

Ian Linkletter:

Yes. And I'm right near the UBC campus, too, so Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, the unseated traditional territory.

Introduction

Ian Linkletter:

And today's expert guests. We have Pan Luo from UBC, Mari Pighini, Dr. Mari Pighini from UBC, and Troy Welch from TRU, and if the three of you could say something about yourselves.

Pan Luo:

Hi, everyone. My name is Pan. I'm the senior program analyst lead for the devops team, so our team is responsible for running different learning applications, including Mattermost, and we are also responsible for different integrations into our campus learning system, Canvas.

Mari Pighini:

Hi, everyone. My name is Mari Pighini, and I am the cohort advisor and lecturer for the early childhood programs at the faculty of education at UBC. And so, I work with the students in the certificate, diploma, and in the masters of early childhood education cohorts, for many years now. My work is almost entirely online. I'm very happy to be here. Thank you for having me.

Ian Linkletter:

Thanks, Mari. And Troy? You may be muted. It wouldn't be a session if someone weren't muted.

Troy Welch:

So I was. I tested the breakout room. Maybe that's why it muted me on the way back, or something. My name's Troy Welch. I'm at TRU in Kamloops, on the learning together and innovations team, which is administratively located in open learning. We do also have a campus-wide mandate for educational technology, which as you can imagine has ramped up significantly in the last four or five months.

Ian Linkletter:

A little bit.

Troy Welch:

A little bit.

Ian Linkletter:

Thanks. And so, I said I would describe the two tracks that we have today. Here in the main room, I'll be here with Dr. Mari Pighini, talking about how she's used tools to build community for many years in the fully online early childhood education cohorts at UBC. So, I'm recommending, if you're faculty or students, this is likely the space for you. Not necessarily. And then, in the breakout room, we'll have Pan and Troy sharing their expertise about how they pilot and implement technology. So, if you're somebody that's getting ready for September, and still ramping up infrastructure, an ed tech or an IT professional, that might be the more interesting conversation for you. But people are welcome to choose any room.

Ian Linkletter:

And so, I think at this point, I'll stop sharing my slides, and we can check out the chat and see who wants to go into what room. I think, yeah. I'm just wondering, maybe in the chat, maybe we can say what our

roles are at our different institutions, and then I can make some recommendations and start moving people over.

Ian Linkletter:

What do people think about the breakout room? Does anybody want to join Troy and Pan, talking about the technology infrastructure? Main room. Main room. Okay, well, let's go ahead and get started, and if the conversation veers off, we might split it, but how does that sound right now? Because I see ... Oh, there are breakout room people. Okay, okay, let's do that. So, let's get started with Troy, Pan, and Brianna, and we'll kick off the conversation here. Breakout room for Ally, too. Great. All right.

Ian Linkletter:

So, thanks everybody for being here. I'm really, really excited to share the space with our experts today. I've worked with Mari at UBC for many years, supporting online programs, when online learning was just a little, tiny piece of what we did, and I'm super excited for her to be here and share about some of the ways that she has fostered community and care in her online learning environments. So, Mari?

Mari Pighini:

Very happy to be here, and I'm very ready to take any questions or comments that you may have. I was listening to the session last week, and I was impressed about the whole discourse of communities of caring, or communities of care when working online. I've been working online for many, many years, and when COVID-19 started, all the changes, it was continuing a bit of what we have been doing, but on a larger scale, I would say.

Mari Pighini:

So, I'm very happy to share with you any questions or comments, various concerns you may have about how is it that we make this community an inclusive one, a flexible one, a welcoming one, a non-punitive one, and especially a very rich community of learning and sharing. I took some notes, again, about what to share, but I think I'm interested in learning from you all, whatever questions that you may have, and then we can start from there. Let me know, Ian, if you want me to elaborate more, or just start a conversation like this.

Q&A Question 1

Ian Linkletter:

Yeah, let's see. I see some people have their webcams on. I don't know if that's because they're raring to go with questions, but let's open it up at this point, and I just want to know, why are people here? What technologies do you plan to use in your courses? How have you used technology in the past to build community? And feel free to type a question in the chat, too, if you don't want to be recorded.

Andrea:

Hello. Hi. My name's Andrea. Is it all right if I start, or if somebody else wants to go first?

Ian Linkletter:

Yes, please.

Andrea:

Great. I've been attending a lot of your sessions, and I really have been enjoying them and learning so much. I was especially interested in the Mattermost platform, I think that Ian, you've mentioned a couple of times in previous sessions. I guess, my role is, I work with the student association in health promotion and wellness workshops, so a lot of our focus is around social wellbeing and trying to build connections with students when they're studying remotely.

Andrea:

So, I think some of the challenges are, is that a lot of the events we currently deliver online are sort of one-off workshop events, so we'll have a meditation class where students will come for an hour, and then they'll leave, and then we meet regularly, like once a week. We also do presentations and things like that. But I think the place we're struggling with is how do we kind of create ongoing relationships with these students that attend these events, and how can we foster peer-to-peer connection? So, not just between us as the staff and them as the student, but between students that are attending these events and might share similar interests, like maybe they are interested in mindfulness. How do we help them build those connections with each other? Because I do feel like sometimes, one-off events, they can provide connection, but it's not meaningful, ongoing relationship-building, which seems to be the real need from students right now.

Mari Pighini:

Okay, that's a question that I can answer, based on my experience of teaching cohorts, but also groups or classes of students around for a term. We have also used them in smaller, or like a one-day event or sessions. But basically, you mentioned you're interested in Mattermost chats. Perhaps I should start by saying we use the Collaborate Ultra platform, which is like a Zoom platform, but it's within UBC, and within it now, we have the Mattermost chat, as well.

Mari Pighini:

Basically, the message is for students to feel welcome and to feel safe, and to invite them to introduce to each other. So, always have time for them in synchronous, but also asynchronous modes, so if you record your session or you have anything there permanently for them to come back, to know that there is a space where they can not only say hello and a little bit about each other, but also come back later and then keep commenting that.

Mari Pighini:

So, discussion platforms or groups, and Mattermost can be one of them, Mattermost chat, or you can have the town hall, and you can correct me if I don't use the terminology correctly, but also making smaller groups that they can choose to be with one another, and it can be private or not. I always tell the students, you can create your own groups, and you can invite me in or not. Do you want me in for that small group, or do you want just to keep it for you, and then call me in when you need it? Or go back to the main, or to the town hall.

Mari Pighini:

When I say I allow time, I mean it's like time and space for students to check in about who they are, what roles do they have in their own professional lives or general community lives, and also to share interests and common interests, or likes, or hobbies, or anything like that, because that is what creates

that space for communication, and that is where they find they only need one point of commonality or contact, and then they go.

Mari Pighini:

Sometimes I notice also when I go ... This is the beauty about the chat, that you can always go back through a thread, in the main town hall, especially. I always go back and notice things that they have been sharing in common, or saying that "I noticed that so and so said that they were in [inaudible 00:13:16]." And then, someone had not noticed that, and they said, "Oh my goodness, I used to work there." And then, you can see that that connection happens.

Mari Pighini:

So, allowing that time and space for town hall and for students to create their own small groups, and also inviting them to say, you can check with me individually, or we can do other small groups, and then provide the times that it's available for you and for them. I think that is a wonderful way, and especially with what you're doing with meditation and mindfulness, that you're missing that energy of everybody together, not being able to follow each other, clues, because you're distanced, right? That would be something very important.

Mari Pighini:

Also, if you have a platform like Zoom or Skype or Collaborate or WebEx or something like that, allowing the same thing through the chat, and also always stating that it is okay to just use the chat. It is okay to not have a camera. It is okay not to have voice, because this brings the different levels of awareness of where they are, but also of feeling comfortable and feeling safe.

Mari Pighini:

So, that's a little bit where it can get started with this, but I don't know if you want me to add anything else, or if someone else in this group, in this conversation has something to add with your experiences, and then we can have a conversation.

Ian Linkletter:

I was just thinking about one thing from working with you, and one thing that I find so inspiring about the way that Mari uses technology is that she doesn't just pick one technology. So, it's not like, okay, we have Mattermost and that's going to be our community platform, or Blackboard Collaborate, and that's going to be the ticket. She uses multiple technologies to create different senses of space for students, and blending the different technologies, so having group chat, as well as web conferencing, as well as asynchronous discussion boards, means that people can engage whatever their circumstances.

Ian Linkletter:

Mari, one of the things that we talked about when we were doing the Mattermost pilot was how having that group chat option meant that somebody could participate at 10 PM, when everybody's gone to sleep in their household. Or I just remember the one time you were talking about even keystrokes being something that might keep people awake, so having all these different options was really inclusive, and provided different ways for students to co-create the experience, too.

Mari Pighini:

Exactly, and acknowledging, for example, I work with early childhood educators, and many of them are also parents, or caregivers, or are caring for others, and sometimes the hours where they are available is where no one else is available, and knowing that they can do this at their time and still have a response coming. I think it's that sense of knowing that someone will be listening, someone will be responding, someone will be interacting, even if it's not at the same time.

Mari Pighini:

The other one is a choice. We do also the Collaborate ultra sessions, like this one in Zoom right now, and we do groups, or we do individual, or we do larger groups. And again, providing that option, and I always say, this session is recorded. You can visit it later, and you can comment on it later. You can comment through here, or you can go through the Mattermost chat, or to the general discussion in the room. I also create a blog in one of the courses, where everybody can go back.

Mari Pighini:

So, I think exactly what Ian is saying, also the point of providing multiple avenues will definitely help, without overwhelming students. Some students say, "That's too many choices," and I say, "Okay, let's pick one where you feel comfortable."

Q&A Question 2

Andrea:

I think, thank you so much, Ian and Mari. That's really helpful. I think giving multiple options is something that we definitely try to do with students, and we were holding wellness support groups, which were very interactive, but we found that students were really hesitant to put on their camera, to put on their mic. But when we invited them to chat via a written text, they were much more engaged.

Andrea:

I think for me, probably the biggest concern that comes up, like from our staff, is in a synchronous style of event, you have a lot of control, because you're there as the facilitator. You can make sure that it's all, there's appropriate conduct, there's a lot more control. But I think there's some fears, and perhaps they're just being, like it's a cautious mindset, but we want to make sure we're creating a safe asynchronous environment.

Andrea:

So, I think we struggle a little bit with making sure that if we do provide a discussion board, it's asynchronous, students can post whatever they like when the staff is not there, how do we create a safe community for everyone, and what is sort of our responsibility as staff to make sure that ... we do do things like the code of conduct and guidelines in the community, but are there any other ways that we can encourage students, how they interact on that platform?

Mari Pighini:

Yeah, thank you, Andrea. That is a very important consideration, and this is one that I had since I started teaching many, many years ago, teaching online. There's a couple of things. First of all, the space that

you are creating of wellness is one that invites for people to come through with a spirit of sharing, of cooperation, of wanting to obtain support or more resources. That's one.

Mari Pighini:

Of course, you could get someone who is feeling anxious or stressed or impatient or frustrated, so one important thing is to have the criteria, or the rules, or the guidelines. I like guidelines more than rules, for space use from the beginning. So, I have that in my syllabus, in my program, online, everywhere, so you have the netiquette. And you can adapt those from the internet to whatever fits your space, right? And so, what type of language we use.

Mari Pighini:

I also say, there's some people who write forever, so I say, in the more conversations regarding a topic, an academic topic, limit to 300 or so words. If you go over that, it means that you have several topics to touch, and you would like people to respond to that, so keep it shorter. We talk about the language, the vocabulary. Personal opinions, personal views, passions, everything is welcome, but in a language that is acknowledging the other, and a language that is non-offensive, non-aggressive.

Mari Pighini:

Also what I do is that if I sense that there is a need to talk about other things, for example, during the beginning, and now through the middle of the pandemic, and then with Black Lives Matter, all of the things have been happening as we teach and as we converse, so I've created separate groups ... not groups, but separate spaces where people can join in, so that not only we, how do you say, remove these issues from the conversation that we're having, but if they need to go deeper or in another sort of more, I don't know, personal tone, or more personal anecdotes, that is important to share, first of all that they have that space, but that it doesn't take away from the other conversation. So, everybody can have a space for that.

Mari Pighini:

At the same time, even in those conversations, it can get sometimes heated, maybe. There is respect for language and respect for the other. Of course, as a moderator, I can always delete a post. It hasn't happened, in more than 10 years. I've been starting with the online teaching since 2000 or so with other platforms and in other programs, but I have never had an offensive post. I did have a student who wanted to petition for child care and I said, "This is excellent. Let's place it here, because if you place it where you have it right now, it's going to create another conversation," and then I got sort of a reprimand from someone, "This political thing shouldn't be here." And I said, "Well, they are early childhood educators and the salaries are really bad," so we moved it to another place.

Mari Pighini:

This is the type of ... I wouldn't know how it would be in your own space, but I would say any criteria that you want to lay out, lay out very clearly, in a very collegial, conversational, collaborative tone, but with clear guidelines for everyone, and provide space for any needs that arise, especially now in this moment for concern and of uncertainty. I don't know, anybody else? Ian? Anybody else want to share?

Ian Linkletter:

In the chat, I just shared a link to our bit.ly document, which does have some things about code of conduct that we talked about on a previous week, so just echoing what Mari said about being very specific about what is and isn't okay. Not being afraid to talk to that person. And most of our institutions do have some sort of respectful environment statement, which if you just don't know where to start, that's a really good place to look.

Mari Pighini:

Sometimes I have helped- Oh, sorry. I though you were ...

Ian Linkletter:

And just one other quick thing was, I think there was part of your question around a hesitance to provide students that sort of environment, and I think that the thing that's really important to keep in mind is that students will find a different way if you don't give them their own platform. So, there's much bigger problems that can arise if they're friending each other on Facebook in ways that make themselves feel uncomfortable. It's very difficult to enforce any sort of respectful environment on a platform that you can't access, and screenshots are not necessarily evidence. So, I find that giving people a safe platform that is Canadian-hosted, HIPAA-compliant, all of that, is usually a better bet. Don't be afraid of it.

Mari Pighini:

I would echo what Ian just said. I have never encountered a situation where I had to deal with a major problem like this. I think it's not just the audience. I mean, we are educators and all of this. But also, it is a fact that from the beginning, this notion of communities, of learning and communities of practice, is very, very well established. It's like, we're in this together. I am doing this with you, you are doing this with me. I am opening myself too. And now, with COVID, everybody knows my house, my one child's room where I can hide while the other one is taking a test here. So, everybody has come into each other homes, and making ourselves a little bit vulnerable or a little bit more out there, but at the same time, saying it's a reciprocal situation. It's a mutual level of respect. I'm offering this to you, and you're offering back.

Mari Pighini:

This community, it really, it echoes a lot of the principles that we follow in the British Columbia early learning framework of relationality, or relations. Feelings of belonging and connectedness, which create this inclusive community. It is a very rich, proactive healthy ... It's health-promoting, which is what I really want, and especially I notice now. Many of my students are under so much stress, financially, with health concerns, some of them being tested. You never know, being front line. Mental health, financial stressors, caring for others, distance from their families. I mean, there's so much going on, or feeling discrimination.

Mari Pighini:

So, I think that this environment, if you create it in this way, it only brings the best of people, and if they express something else, it is a cry for help, so then you have the resources there to address them. And I'm talking with 20 years of experience and in many, many settings. I used to work with a community of migrant workers, taking, this was a remote program in the States, but I was here. Taking a diploma

certification. So, I worked with many different students, and with different situations, so I hope this is helpful, and again, I would love to hear from you and from others.

Andrea:

Yes. Thank you, Mari. That was really helpful. I think it's a great perspective, and I also like what Ian said about looking at it from a different perspective of people finding a way to create a space. I think, I don't want to take up too much time. I know other people probably have questions here. I think it's definitely always a consideration when we're thinking, like for some cases, if it's a pride or LGBTQ social, we try to make it anonymous for students to create safety. But then, any time you make an event anonymous, you always, you have to balance that with people in an anonymous community might feel they can say more things that they might not usually. It's just being a risk-averse mindset. I mean, we haven't had any experiences, of course, but I'm just considering, there's always a balance between accessibility, anonymity, a safe environment. So, that's just a comment, but I don't want to take up too much space here. I know other folks in line probably have questions, as well.

Ian Linkletter:

No, that's really interesting. Thank you for sharing.

Mari Pighini:

It is, and also, the aspect about anonymity, which I don't deal with, because all the students are registered, and you can always see who is talking. Maybe you cannot see them or hear them, and you just chat, but the name and the ID is associated with the university. So, I wouldn't have expertise here. I don't know if anybody else in the group, and I see names, Jess, Frank and others, Mandy and Anna, Karina, and Mary, and Yvette, and Linda, and [Batak 00:29:26]. I don't know if anybody else has anything to share. Maybe it would be interesting for me to also know, what are you working, what is your role, and what issues you confront, for me to learn.

Q&A Question 3

Speaker 7:

I was wondering, Mari, if you did anything with prison education or technology. I was wondering if you did any courses with online learning.

Mari Pighini:

All of my courses are online. I've been teaching online for, I would say, 20 years now. In my current role as a cohort advisor, I teach three courses for the graduate cohorts and four courses for the diploma or certificate courses. So, the way that the courses are designed is that they are preset with the different modules, activities, content, and some of them have blogs. Some of them have PowerPoint recordings, or any type of recordings. And then, through there, I address students' submissions and discussions.

Mari Pighini:

We have some synchronous sessions, but for my particular programs, they are asynchronous. So, I web record sessions where we check in and cover specific topics, and then they get back to me. And it's a prerequisite, or a requirement. I say, "We're having these sessions during the term," and I mark them on the calendar, and I say, you are not required to attend at the same time. Especially, I have people all

over. I even have a student in Nigeria and one in Thailand right now, Canadian students who are abroad, but you need to preview it and come back with any questions or comments, or follow up with any assignments.

Mari Pighini:

So, this is more or less in the big scheme of what I'm working. I don't know if this is helpful, and if you had any specific question or comment about that, or maybe you can share about what you do. Yeah.

Q&A Question 4

Speaker 7:

We do a lot of courses that are on closed servers in prisons, and we use a lot of open education content, and we're always trying to improve using technology, so that we can get teachers remotely into the prisons to teach, and to address education right now, because this is a huge change, that instructors cannot go into the prisons, and now we have to have a secure way of running education within the walls.

Mari Pighini:

Wow.

Speaker 7:

And so, a lot of offline, online type of synchronous going on, and we're troubleshooting it on several different levels right now.

Mari Pighini:

And how do you run your ... Right now, with the teachers, with the instructors running the classes, are they pre-recording the sessions, or are they ... How is that working?

Speaker 7:

Yes. That's happening at one site. We're helping them to get recorded sessions, and then they can be assigned through the curriculum to each student and what level they're at, and those are recordings from Zoom. And then, we're also testing through Canvas a platform that goes directly from the college server, going into another youth correction facility. This is in Washington state. So, we're testing out different technologies, both for doing it live, and then also doing it offline, and then also creating a lot of offline content for study to keep individuals occupied, in which we use a lot of OER resources, textbooks, loop courses, to keep people engaged, and also letting the teachers know what they have for their learning.

Mari Pighini:

Wow, that is incredible, and I think that facilitating content so that it can be downloaded offline is super important. We have had so many students who are living in remote communities, where they could only have access to internet for a certain part of the day, and then they would go home and they would not have access. So, being able to download and have those, and print, if they have the chance, material, helped a lot. And also, different learning styles. Some people receive the material online, but they print everything because they can follow it easier. I think that's a great idea.

Mari Pighini:

I would say, the way that I have seen my students respond best, and Ian and everybody else at ETS, they have told me is that the modules are sort of presented in segments, so you don't have a big chunk of information, but you separate it into smaller components. It's like when you eat, if you eat too much, you get a stomach ache or you cannot swallow. So, this way you have like little tapas, and so you go digesting, and it really helps.

Mari Pighini:

And maybe have a follow up. In one course, I do checklists, like when you finish this, this is what you will have been able to accomplish, and were you able to do this? And if not, don't worry. It's not that you've lost it all, but you have a chance until the next one. Provide these flexible ways. But what an incredible work. If I can ever support you with that, that would be amazing. Wow. So needed.

Speaker 7:

No, believe me, the Canadian, what you're doing across the border ... I'm in Bellingham. I admire the work that you've done with remote learning, and also with personation, and I learn a lot from attending these, so you are helping, believe me.

Mari Pighini:

Thank you.

Speaker 7:

And all the textbooks that you guys have, and I love the newsletter. So, thank you already.

Mari Pighini:

That's awesome. Yeah, my work was in Bellingham. That was in Western Washington University, with the migrant workers. They were across the state, so that's how we started. Yeah, thank you. And I don't know, Andrea or Diana, or Jess. I know Karina, I know Mandy. Anybody else? Batak? Mary, Yvette, Linda? I don't know, there's a few people. So, if it's just listening, it's great, but I just want to make sure that if you have more comments or questions, or Ian, anything else?

Ian Linkletter:

Can I just say, I love tapas instead of modules? A lot of people are allergic to the word modules.

Mari Pighini:

Yeah, we should get rid of modules and just have tapas. Yeah.

Q&A Question 5

Speaker 8:

I have my own ... Can you guys hear me, first of all?

Ian Linkletter:

Yes.

Mari Pighini:

Yes.

Speaker 8:

I've been actually taking the bootcamps through BCcampus, and thank goodness for BCcampus. You guys are just coming through for us. And by just taking these bootcamps, these are professionals that are responsible for online delivery, and I was really nervous, really nervous taking the course, because I was starting from ground level, delivering any information online. I had been all classroom, email, that's it. Not even a little.

Speaker 8:

The bootcamp helped me a lot, so first of all, I can't say enough about that. But I also learned about how to develop a community from their examples, and just things like having the synchronous sessions open ahead of time, rather than having a waiting room, and then everybody is ... Because it's sort of like having that time for them to talk before class, and creating that community.

Speaker 8:

They had set up a little forum. I can't remember what they called it, but a little break room. I think they called it the water cooler, or something, where somebody posted a picture of their pet, and then of course, everybody's posting, and of course, I'm in there like a dirty shirt. And all of these things ... There was a guest speaker who talked about icebreakers, and just having people learn how to use Moodle, like me, and showing them where the annotate function was. They just had them doodle everywhere, and we would accidentally doodle over other people, so then we sort of figured it out.

Speaker 8:

All those little things. One of them was prior to ... or, an asynchronous component was, what do you see outside your window right now? And they didn't have to identify anything about themselves, but just what do you see? And type it, submit photos. So, those have helped me create a community, which has ... I can't believe I never even thought of it, but now it's like, this has to be done. So, that's my two cents.

Mari Pighini:

That's great. Yes, I really like that idea. Yeah, and I like the idea that you don't have to talk about you, or who you are, or whatever, if you don't want. Some of that, yes, it is very important, especially if you're feeling very stressed or very vulnerable. You want to take it away from you, right? But you still want to connect. That doesn't mean that the connecting part is not there.

Mari Pighini:

Another one that we have used is a place. What is a place that is important for you, or what is a place that you can connect, or favorite place from childhood? That one seems to be a really good one, and it brings everybody together, and they go like, "Oh, yeah." So, people can connect, and then they start ... because all you want is to get those little pods started, and then they sort of multiply, right? And let it go. Yeah.

Q&A Question 6

Mari Pighini:

I saw something about Tribe, that Andrea is asking, but I don't know about Tribe. I would like to know.

Ian Linkletter:

Yeah, I'm not familiar with that platform.

Mari Pighini:

I will know. I will look for it.

Ian Linkletter:

Other community platform.

Mari Pighini:

Then Mattermost and Ultra Collab are two. Just the chats and the breakout rooms. Those are the ones that I use. Any other ideas, Ian?

Ian Linkletter:

I see blogs used really effectively.

Mari Pighini:

The blogs, right.

Ian Linkletter:

The collaborative blogs, and kind of having a circle of blogs where people have their own spaces.

Mari Pighini:

The blogs, my experience with the blog, because we talk about the chats and the discussion boards, as well. My experience with the blogs is that the students who had something that they wanted to share, be it an image or a story or a text attached around the topic, they were right in, and then a small group was created of people who would respond to those threads. Other people felt that, "Oh my goodness, these ones who are posting are amazing, and they're very advanced, or whatever. I don't have something like that." They felt intimidated. So, I found that with the blog, it had one group of people who would shine, and the other ones who felt like, "I want to go lower."

Mari Pighini:

And then, with the discussion groups, I found that if the discussion group allows for threads, it's easier than those that don't allow for threads. Like, I found I was having this conversation with Ian with Canvas, which is the one that we use. It's not as good for visible threads. I mean, you can follow it through a search, but it's not intuitive.

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Ian Linkletter:

It keeps getting narrower and narrower. So, students start with the discussion, which is great, but then they start getting this wide.

Mari Pighini:

Andrea has a lot of ideas. Padlet. I'm going to get into that. Andrea, you can come in as an expert to teach me, because you know way more than what I'm using for my courses.

Ian Linkletter:

What other tools are people using? This is such an interesting question. Other examples of online community-building platforms?

Mari Pighini:

Yeah, anybody else in the conversation? I already shared all my cards under my sleeves.

Andrea:

I've heard that Flipgrid is pretty popular in high schools. I don't know if universities are using that. Flipgrid. Maybe I'll type it in there.

Mari Pighini:

Yeah, type in. Yes.

Ian Linkletter:

Yeah, I've heard of that being used by our teacher candidates.

Speaker 8:

Can you repeat what was just said? I didn't hear it.

Mari Pighini:

Flipgrid. It's in the chat now. And Padlet. Oh, Anna says, "I've used Padlet. It helps students to share their ideas." How does Padlet work?

Ian Linkletter:

It's a collaborative wall, basically. There's a lot of different templates, but I've seen it used for things like going away cards, where everybody can contribute on the card. And brainstorming, if that's what you're looking for.

Q&A Question 7

Mari Pighini:

Oh, nice. Okay. And I see that Jess is saying that Instagram is an informal blog. That would be useful, too. The only that, for example, we, in the courses, or I particularly don't go into more like a social media platform like Instagram, just because of the privacy concerns, and so many students want to know that

this is kept there within that platform, and in Canada, and all of that. Of course, then they go and share their lives on Facebook. But for the purposes of what we're doing, keeping it safe. But those are great ideas.

Ian Linkletter:

That's something that I talk about a lot when we use open source technology, is just the tracking, the ads, the profiling. That's just not even in the picture. And so, it's a really good opportunity with students to let them know that, because a lot of times, the open source technology, it's not as good, and that's because Google's a trillion-dollar company, Facebook is a trillion-dollar company. They can innovate and have thousands of people working on those interfaces. But students generally, one they find out that it's for their protection, it's for their privacy, it's for their freedom, they really appreciate it.

Mari Pighini:

Yeah, they do. Definitely, they do. In fact, I have had students abroad who cannot use any other platform, but because the collaborate is within Canvas, the collaborate operates within Canvas, and it is protected in that way, then in their country where they are, where there may be some restrictions, they can access this, but they may not access anything else. So, this is something, if you are teaching also students who may have been here, but then they had to go back to their country of origin during COVID, and they're there but they still want to connect, it is important to know this.

Mari Pighini:

For example, in my courses, some of my courses, I had some YouTube video that had been even captioned and everything, that were really high quality, as resources, or Vimeos, and then my students write to me and says, "I cannot open because we have restrictions where I am." So, I have to find a way for them to have that information or that resource that I want. So, it is important to know these things if you are also working with students who are in other countries, where either because they have internet limitations or because they have censorship, some of these may not be available. And we forget this because here, we can basically open everything that we want.

Ian Linkletter:

Yeah, I'm glad that we don't rely on too many US companies right now. What was the announcement yesterday? 45 days, and TikTok gets banned? That's term start, so I hope you're not using TikTok.

Mari Pighini:

Anybody else? Did I answer your questions well, or did you want me to elaborate more, or do you have any other ideas?

Ian Linkletter:

And still lots of people who haven't shared. That's totally okay, but I hope that you feel like you have a space.

Mari Pighini:

Exactly. Yeah, this is another caution statement that I always say. It is okay if you don't want to share. It is okay. You can comment later. This is the students, not for you. But we were talking before about the code of conduct, but also the netiquette or the guidelines, and I said, sometimes you're in sessions and

you feel like you're more in receptive mode, or you're listening to it in the background, right? You may be cooking and attending to your child, and then also listening to this.

Mari Pighini:

So, for me, this is why in teaching, the participation, I like to evaluate asynchronously, because I don't want to be judging that because someone did not participate when I'm teaching, they're doing less or they're less interested. No, I don't know what's happening at the other end. I cannot see their lives, and I need to assume that as adults, they are there, with interest and respectfully, and trying to do the best that they can at the time, and then listen to them, from them, maybe later. So, this is maybe more related to the online teaching aspect.

Mari Pighini:

Thank you, Linda.

Q&A Question 8

Speaker 7:

I was wondering if any of you see any of your students who have Linux systems on their laptops or desktops that they use? And if so, which operating system, or which distribution?

Ian Linkletter:

We haven't seen too much of it. I know that at the university level, it's significant enough that we have to think about things like if faculties are using exam and visualization software and things like that, usually it doesn't work on Linux. But thankfully, most of the applications that we're using now are web-based, so if you can use a modern browser, then you're good. Does anybody else have more experience with that?

Mari Pighini:

I don't. And I also know, I feel always as if I am making an advertisement, because Collaborate works best with Google Chrome, and I don't know if this can be accessed through Linux. Is it Line ... I don't know, Linux. And, yeah, so I don't know about that. But I don't know if anybody else does.

Speaker 7:

Yes, it can be put on the system, Chrome can. That's good to know, everything's web-based now.

Mari Pighini:

You see, I am ignorant that way.

Speaker 7:

Thank you.

Ian Linkletter:

So, time is flying. I just noticed that it's 2:22 already.

Mari Pighini:

I know.

Ian Linkletter:

So, I think pretty shortly, the two rooms are going to merge again. I hope that we have the opportunity to find out what they were talking about.

Mari Pighini:

That would be nice.

Ian Linkletter:

But is there anything else that we didn't cover? There's so much more, I feel like, but with time flying, I want to make sure that everybody's had an opportunity to ask their questions.

Mari Pighini:

I was just looking also through my notes. Something I also had in mind, too. Well, there's a couple. One is about when you set up a program or a course or a workshop, always to have a moment for an orientation. If it's a course or a program, if it's a workshop, just to have the little lay of the land, and to have that recorded. I find that very useful, because then students go like, "Oh, yes, right, so you're not covering this, or we cannot do this right now." The expectations always have been very clear, and provide as much information as possible. Also this gives students a choice to say, "You know, maybe this is not for me. I need to look for something else." So, I think that is very, very useful. So, information sessions and orientation sessions we do in our programs, and they have been very, very helpful. All of them recorded. And I see that I think Kelsey is giving that, the other breakout room.

Mari Pighini:

The other aspect was related to something that I heard in the session last week, and it's about trauma-informed practice, and the resource that I believe Kelsey ... no, Brianna?

Ian Linkletter:

Brenna.

Mari Pighini:

Brenna had shared. And so, how this trauma-informed practice is something that we need to be aware and cognizant. Trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive. Not only now, during COVID, but I have found that through all my studies, all my work with students and my own studies, aware of what are issues that trigger students, and how to respond, knowing that when you're teaching, there's aspects that are related to trauma that are going to come out, and more so now, where limitations of so many types are out there, and people are suffering so much.

Mari Pighini:

Some people, like I had students write to me and say, "I cannot work anymore. So-and-so died in my family." Which can happen any time during the COVID. Or, "I'm too exhausted. I'm managing this, this, and that, and I cannot even think of an assignment." So, that brings also the issue about flexibility, of

timelines for assignments, and how to open windows for students, provide alternate ways to respond, to submit assignments. Have options for assignments or tests. So, all of these issues are, for me, very important. And I think everybody's coming back. Very, very good one, that presentation.

Ian Linkletter:

I shared that in the chat.

Mari Pighini:

Yes, I see that. Yes.

Ian Linkletter:

Yeah, now is not the time to be very strict on things. Now is the time for compassion.

Mari Pighini:

Now is the time for compassion. It's always time for compassion, but now more than ever.

Ian Linkletter:

I think that they still have three minutes left, so we'll probably come right up at 2:30. So, we still have time for a little bit more discussion.

Mari Pighini:

Yeah. Anybody else has experienced something like this? Because it's not just it's the students, but it's staff, and it's faculty. Again, we're all in this, and more so now. I have shared with my students, not things that would worry them, but I have shared, I hear what you say. I'm also concerned about relatives and health, or something that brings that conversation, that puts us more here and not here.

Q&A Question 9

Ian Linkletter:

There's a question in the chat about flexibility. So, how flexible are you? How long to wait when grades are due?

Mari Pighini:

By nature, I'm very flexible, so this helps, but I'm also realistic about grades, when they're due, and deadlines, so that I can respond to students. So, right now, for example ... Not right now. A few weeks back, I sort of reviewed the whole guidelines for the course, because we were approaching the end of the course, and I said, "You know, life happens, so if within the next two weeks, something terrible happens that you really cannot complete the course, let me know. Don't go MIA, because we could work out standing deferred status if needed."

Mari Pighini:

And I always give a flexible ... I always have my deadlines so that if there is a week, if someone needs a few more hours, a few more days, and then if not, because I also need some time off, a vacation, or because the day that the grades are due and that's it, I work out another process. And I work on a case-

by-case scenario, but I also let them know, if there is unprecedented circumstances, things that are beyond your control, let's work it out, but it needs a process.

Mari Pighini:

So, that helps students think, oh, can I manage my schedule better, even though there's these circumstances, or can I really work around so that I don't need to go through a four-month process of standing deferred, which means that my grade doesn't get uploaded until later on? And this is something that I have used on campus and online, but I have noticed that I had to be more flexible during the end of the winter term, and I taught all summer, so now, during the summer, as well.

Conclusion

Ian Linkletter:

I just shared a slide because I noticed that the two rooms are together.

Mari Pighini:

Yeah, we're together.

Ian Linkletter:

So, thank you everybody for being here. We're coming right on 2:30, so I just want to share the information that we have left, and then I'll be here for at least a few more minutes.

Ian Linkletter:

This is the second of our four drop-in sessions, leading off from our original webinar. Today was the technology toolkit. Next Friday, on the 14th, at the same time, is multimedia help, and then we'll close off with another learning Design Studio on August 21st. Really excited. We have awesome experts coming in in future weeks, so please join us, and you can learn more about these events on the BCcampus website. I was really happy to see lots of nice words about the BCcampus events in our room, today.

Duane Seibel:

Okay, and I'm going to step in. Thank you, Ian. So, on behalf of BCcampus, I'd like to thank and acknowledge our appreciation for Ian, for sharing and facilitating this third part of a five-part series, or the second of four drop-in sessions, and also thank our experts today, Mari, Troy and Pan, for participating. And I trust people had fun in the other room, as well. We hope you all return next week, next Friday at 1:30 for the next drop-in session.

Duane Seibel:

Thanks for participating. I want to acknowledge that this has been recorded and will be posted on the BCcampus webinar site, and the link is there to the COVID-19 series that this is part of, and encourage you to visit the BCcampus website to get more information or sign up for the newsletter. Somebody acknowledged in our room that he really liked the newsletter, and it does come up with information each week about upcoming webinars and other things, as well.

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Duane Seibel:

And as always, I'd like to acknowledge the people in the background that are doing all of the technical support for this technical series, Kelsey and Declan with BCcampus. Thanks again, and hope to all see you back again soon.