

What I Learned During the Transition to Online Classes

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Picture someone saying this to you last year: “How about the entire community of Seneca moves all student services and courses online. You will have only two weeks to do it. You also need to keep delivering the high-quality experience you have to all students and not sacrifice any academic integrity or student learning. Oh, and there will be a global health pandemic affecting you while you do this.” What would your reaction have been? If you’re like me, you would have laughed them out of the room (or maybe used some choice words with an emphatic “impossible”...).

Well, here we are. There were a few bumps and a lot of learning (and an obscene amount of coffee), but here we are. I was asked to share my experience as a faculty member transitioning from in-person to online classes and as I reflected, it struck me how amazing this truly is. The following are some of my learnings in our transition.

First, I had to check my mindset. More than ever, I tried to remember my primary job is to provide students with the resources they need to succeed. These included more (and better) communication, more compassion, more support, and more agility.

Second, I needed to be more of a learner. I consider myself technologically savvy and efficient, and realized this mindset was not helpful. There was much to learn. I realized the tools I thought were best were the ones I’m most **comfortable** with. Once I made this shift, I think I learned more in the last month than in the last year.

Third, I needed to learn how to better balance compassion and flexibility with maintaining fairness and integrity. I landed on often asking myself, “if every student asked for this and I was to present the decision to all my faculty peers, how would I feel?”



Fourth, with two kids and a partner who also works, I learned how to work a bit smarter. I got a little workspace in our bedroom, I learned to work in better chunks, and I learned efficiencies from teaching and learning in creating online tests and grading.

Finally, I tried to be patient with myself and others. This one is hard, but I found it to be the most important.

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