COMMON MISTAKES IN ONLINE TEACHING

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This Article explores five common mistakes in online teaching and how to fix them. This analysis results from data consisting of student comments on mid-semester surveys in an Online Trusts & Estates course, as well as focus groups on online law courses.

INTRODUCTION

As more professors move to online teaching in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth exploring common mistakes in online teaching. In doing so, this Article draws on student comments, both from mid-semester surveys in three different sections of my Online Trusts & Estates course as well as from focus groups run on the law school's general online programming, which continues to expand past 20 asynchronous online courses.[1] While all of these asynchronous online courses were built over the course of many months on the learning management platform Canvas, the lessons also apply to synchronous courses done through live but online meetings, such as through Zoom.[2]

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1.   *Online Courses*, IND. UNIV. MCKINNEY SCH. L., https://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/courses/official-descriptions/online.html (last visited Sept. 27, 2021) [https://perma.cc/2C37-QYUD]. Publication of student data in this study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) contingent on reporting the data anonymously. However, to protect student identities and to encourage them to share their opinions honestly, the data was collected anonymously. Specifically, all Online Trusts & Estates mid-semester surveys were anonymous when administered in Spring 2015, Spring 2016, and Fall 2016. Furthermore, the 3 small focus groups with 18 total students held in April 2018 were all led by a facilitator, Dr. Douglas Jerolimov from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis's Center for Teaching and Learning, who was assisted by research assistant Kayleigh Long; they then scrubbed the transcripts of any identifying information. See Appendix A for the questions posed to students in the mid-semester surveys and focus groups.

2.   CANVAS, https://www.instructure.com/canvas (last visited Sept. 27, 2021) [https://perma.cc/8HBG-UTR3]; ZOOM, https://zoom.us/ (last visited Sept. 27, 2021) [https://perma.cc/4388-5FLX]. "Synchronous means real-time and asynchronous means time-shifted . . . . Generally, synchronous online courses can be imagined as taking place over a video-conference [such as Zoom or Skype] . . . . [In contrast], asynchronous online courses can be imagined as being conducted through a course website [a learning management system such as Canvas or Blackboard] with readings, recorded lectures, and student activities posted for students to access. The professor guides students through the course website using discussion boards and after-the-fact commentary on student assignments and quizzes." Max Huffman, *Online Learning Grows Up—And Heads to Law School*, 49 IND. L. REV. 57, 58–59 (2015).

The data suggests five common mistakes made in online teaching: over-assigning work, giving lectures that are too lengthy, not engaging in multiple formats of learning, being disorganized, and not engaging with students. These common mistakes often arise when professors new to online teaching use the same teaching techniques that they have used successfully in a live classroom. However, online teaching often requires a broader set of teaching tools, as well as a different way of thinking about teaching.

1.   Over-Assigning Work

While assessments are important to both live and online teaching,[3] over-assigning work is a common mistake in online teaching.[4] Professors should resist the urge to do this, even if they do so because they cannot monitor students online the same way as in a live course.

As one student said in a focus group, "I had four classes last semester. [The online class] was the least amount of credits that I was taking, but it would be [the] most amount of work that I had the whole time. Actually my other classes suffered because of the amount of work that this one class had."[5] In contrast, another focus group student noted, "I really enjoy [my online course] right now. I think that it's an appropriate amount of work."[6]

Professors should moderate the amount of their assignments for several reasons. Students are already necessarily putting in a lot of work in order to learn the material more independently online than in a classroom.[7] Furthermore, intrinsically motivating students by providing engaging content instead of extrinsically motivating students with a long check-list of tasks is more effective.[8] Finally, professors steeped in a subject matter may forget that their students are learning it for the first time.[9]

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3.   There have been increasing calls to include assessments as a regular part of teaching. *See, e.g.*, A.B.A., Managing Director's Guidance Memo Standards 301, 302, 314 and 315 (2015), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/governancedocuments/2015_learning_outcomes_guidance.authcheckdam.pdf [https://perma.cc/NQF2-S8JH].

4.   *Cf.* Yvonne M. Dutton et al., *Assessing Online Learning in Law Schools: Students Say Online Classes Deliver*, 96 Denv. L. Rev. 493, 531 (2019).

5.   Student 1, Focus Group 1 (Apr. 11, 2018) (on file with the author). The student continued, "Like you said, you'd never know how many hours it was going to be. You knew for sure there was at least maybe an hour's worth of reading and, what, three hours['] worth of video, two hours['] worth of video. That's the bare minimum and then whatever else. It was very hard to plan out your projects for your other classes." *Id.*

6.   Student 1, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

7.   Dutton et al., *supra* note 4, at 496–97 ("Students are responsible for their own learning in an autonomous setting such as an online classroom.").

8.   *See generally* Margaret Ryznar & Yvonne Dutton, *Lighting A Fire: The Power of Intrinsic Motivation in Online Teaching*, 70 Syracuse L. Rev. 73 (2020).

9.   As one focus group student remarked, "So, in [this one online course], we have like three questions from the book. But it was really hard because you had to go through and kind of try to understand, like this one statement and how it interplays with this one and that one, and this one and that one. And so, we're only answering three questions, but it took a really long time." Student 1, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

In my Online Trusts & Estates course, students were spending more time on course materials than required, which I eventually built into the expected work load of students, giving them the time to re-watch and review course materials. In particular, the data on the number of clicks on my course video lectures showed that students watched the lecture videos at least twice on average. Thus, students would often spend at least 20 minutes on a 10-minute video. As one student commented, "I love videos. And also just partly because it's something that you can replay . . . at the end of the semester. So like for the Trusts and Estates class, I just looked at all the videos over. I mean, that's not the only thing I did, but that's one of the things I did was just look at all the videos and read all the slides again before the final."[10]

Group work should be used sparingly in asynchronous online courses—students take online courses for their flexibility, which decreases with the need to coordinate schedules with other students. As one student puts it, "[O]ne of the points of taking the online class is because you want to fit it into your schedule. Then when you have this additional responsibility to try to fit three people's schedules or four people's schedules, it's doable but it's just an added burden I think to the process."[11] Professors should therefore use group work only when the educational benefits outweigh the costs. In contrast, break-out rooms in synchronous sessions, where students meet at the same time online, may help break up monotony and increase student comfort to speak up in class.[12]

2.   Giving Long Lectures

Influenced by the format of a live lecture course, faculty may record a video lecture for an asynchronous online course that is the length of a live course, such as 2 or 3 hours. However, this is a mistake. One student in a focus group expressed that which professors should avoid with their lecture videos: "I've had some online courses that I've put on in the background as I'm doing stuff around the house. It didn't matter if I actually listened to it because it was such a full dump of material that it was hard to keep up, that sort of thing."[13]

People's attention spans—not just students'—continue to decrease.[14] Research has confirmed that ideally lecture videos should be approximately ten

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10.   Student 4, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

11.   Student 1, Focus Group 1 (Apr. 11, 2018) (on file with the author).

12.   Cass Sunstein explains that "self-silencing is everywhere" when students believe that their views are out of step with those of their peers, on topics such as politics, religion, gender, and race. Cass R. Sunstein, *Self-Silencing and Online Learning* (Harv. Pub. Law Working Paper No. 20-37, 2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3663208 [https://perma.cc/C6XK-AFVF].

13.   Student 1, Focus Group 1 (Apr. 11, 2018) (on file with the author).

14.   One study suggested that the human attention span recently decreased 33%, from 12 seconds to 8 seconds over a period of approximately 15 years. Kevin McSpadden, *You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish*, TIME (May 14, 2015, 5:09 AM), https://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/ [https://perma.cc/EYA9-4YNJ].

minutes.[15] It is better to have several short lecture videos than a long one.[16] As one student pointed out, "But from what we know about the brain and the attention span, I think that those [short lecture] videos are particularly good for me because it was sort of a bite-size snapshot of this is what you can take in at this point in time. So, as opposed to a full two- or three-hour lecture, which is certainly hard to sit through. And, I think we drift in and out of that sometimes."[17]

Long videos also discourage students from engaging in positive study habits, such as re-watching lectures and taking notes from them. In addition, students benefit from being able to pause, re-wind, and re-watch lectures. As a Fall 2016 student noted, "I like being able to replay the lectures as many times as I like. In an in-person class, sometimes I miss something and can't go back to clarify it. So, it is nice to be able to review the lecture material at the click of a button."[18] Such an approach to studying is more possible and inviting with shorter lecture videos, and leaves class time for other activities, such as assessments.

One student in a focus group placed two online courses as being on the polar opposite sides of the learning experience based on the length of the videos:

> I think for me, probably one of the classes that I felt I've learned the material the best and one of the classes I felt I've learned material the worst in my law school experience, those were both online classes. It was a different structure. The one where I felt like I learned it the best, there were some shorter videos, a couple 15, 20 minute videos. Three of those for a week, and then a short formative assessment at the end of that. Those weekly check-ins I felt really helped me learn the material in the same way that people have talked about. One of the other classes that I felt I didn't learn the material as well was where the professor lectured for two and a half hours during the week in an online setting, and then had one of the formative assessments. I don't know, perhaps it was just the way that class worked, but come to [the] final, I felt much more confident on the one with the short videos and the formative assessments than the one with a ton of the information.[19]

15.   *See, e.g.*, Philip Guo, *Optimal Video Length for Student Engagement*, EDX BLOG (Nov. 13, 2013), https://blog.edx.org/optimal-video-length-student-engagement [https://perma.cc/2PMS-R5XT] ("The optimal video length is 6 minutes or shorter—students watched most of the way through these short videos . . . . The take-home message for instructors is that, to maximize student engagement, they should work with instructional designers and video producers to break up their lectures into small, bite-sized pieces."). *But see* Karen Wilson & James H. Korn, *Attention During Lectures: Beyond Ten Minutes*, 34 TEACHING OF PSYCHOL. 85, 85 (2007), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00986280701291291#.UxdU5-ddXrU [https://perma.cc/3Q69-YLXL] ("Many authors claim that students' attention declines approximately 10 to 15 min into lectures. To evaluate this claim, we reviewed several types of studies including studies of student note taking, observations of students during lectures, and self-reports of student attention, as well as studies using physiological measures of attention. We found that the research on which this estimate is based provides little support for the belief that students' attention declines after 10 to 15 min.").

16.   *See* Guo, *supra* note 15.

17.   Student 3, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

18.   *See infra* app. A.

19.   Student 4, Focus Group 1 (Apr. 11, 2018) (on file with the author).

Similarly, there are reasons to avoid consistently long lectures in synchronous online sessions. For example, there are learning benefits to more active learning,[20] which can help dispel the Zoom fatigue that interferes with student learning.[21]

3. *Not Engaging Students in Multiple Formats of Learning*

There is a long tradition of the Socratic method in law school.[22] Zoom or other simultaneous online teaching sessions can replace live classes closely by allowing professors to question students in front of the whole class in real time.[23]

Research shows, however, that everyone learns differently. "Some students learn verbally; some aurally; some physically; and some visually."[24] While during the COVD-19 emergency remote teaching most faculty used exclusively Zoom to finish their semesters, Zoom is only one tool available to faculty.[25]

As one student in the focus group on online courses explained:

> I mean, there is a rhyme and reason to the Socratic method, but there are people who don't thrive in that environment and don't like that environment. And so, I think, for your first year, you absolutely should be exposed to that environment, because you are entering the practice of law, so no matter what you do, that's a good skill to have. But I think as the online classes open up and you're able to take them in your second and third year, sometimes people realize that, 'That Socratic environment is not the environment in which I learn best.' Whether it's a focus on one to three students during a class period and no one else really gets called on. So, someone really just may like that environment where they sit down and they engage in the learning themselves and there isn't a lot of that. And so, I think that would be another category to consider is people that just don't know if they thrive in that kind of learning environment.[26]

It may therefore be helpful to use varied approaches in teaching, and this is particularly true in online learning.[27] In fact, one of the strengths of online learning is that it helps facilitate the use of multiple formats to present the material and assess students. As one student in the focus group said:

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20. *See, e.g.*, Raul Ruiz, *Leveraging Noncognitive Skills to Foster Bar Exam Success: An Analysis of the Efficacy of the Bar Passage Program at FIU Law*, 99 NEB. L. REV. 141, 168 (2020).

21. *See, e.g.*, Ray Schroeder, *Zoom Fatigue: What We Have Learned*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Jan. 20, 2021), http://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/blogs/online-trending-now/zoom-fatigue-what-we-have-learned [https://perma.cc/3GCW-4CS5].

22. Deborah Borman & Catherine Haras, *Something Borrowed: Interdisciplinary Strategies for Legal Education*, 68 J. LEGAL EDUC. 357, 381 (2019).

23. Huffman, *supra* note 2, at 61 ("Synchronous teaching using audio-conference or chat-room technology makes Socratic dialog possible, but stilted.").

24. John Sonsteng et al., *Learning by Doing: Preparing Law Students for the Practice of Law*, 21 WM. MITCHELL L. REV. 111, 137 (1995).

25. *See* CANVAS, *supra* note 2; ZOOM, *supra* note 2.

26. Student 3, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

27. Robin A. Boyle & Rita Dunn, *Teaching Law Students through Individual Learning Styles*, 62 ALB. L. REV. 213, 223 (1998) ("[L]aw professors should avoid adopting an across-the-board teaching method.").

I'm a mix of different kinds of learning styles, so I run through audio and visual together, and then also just reading on my own. So, I kind of have to do all the different methods in order to have it in my brain. So that's one of the things I like about online is you can get all those different methods if they put that into the online course.[28]

For example, in asynchronous online teaching, it is possible for professors to use video lectures, audio, pictures and animations, and written explanations of concepts. It is also possible to ask students to share their own recorded video presentation, to submit written discussion posts, or to complete practical exercises such as drafting legal documents.

This multi-method approach also extends to assessments, helping students to work on the various skills necessary in the practice of law.[29] While litigators must have the skill of standing in front of a judge to present their case, for which the Socratic method provides training, corporate and tax lawyers benefit from problem-solving and quantitative skills.[30] Although appellate lawyers must train in reading appellate cases, as traditional live law school classroom teaching does, trial lawyers must know how to draft motions.[31] Thus, while traditional law school teaching does an excellent job of providing certain skills, discussion boards and other assessments in asynchronous online courses can hone additional skills, such as writing.[32]

To enhance synchronous online teaching, meanwhile, Zoom can be supplemented with electronic quizzes and submissions, as well as prepared videos and other online content.[33] For example, professors could use polling in Zoom or share videos with students. Alternatively, they can deliver supplemental content through the law school's learning platform, such as Canvas or Blackboard, which have built-in quizzes and discussion boards.[34] This allows professors to replace in-class monitoring of students by doing knowledge checks. While in a live classroom professors can do this quickly by scanning the room and seeing students'

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28. Student 4, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

29. Jacob D. Skousen & Spencer C. Weiler, *Aligning Educational Objectives with Educational Activities: Examination of Student Perceptions on Two Asynchronous Learning Activities*, 25 J.L. Bus. & Eth. 1, 6 (2019) ("In order to create an effective asynchronous assignment, professors teaching online courses should have an array of activities that, collectively, work to engage all types of learners."); *see also* Margaret Ryznar, *Reaction to Shope, Real World Problem-Solving in the Digital Classroom*, 51 Ind. L. Rev. 461, 461 (2018) ("In fact, technology has progressed so much in legal practice that many tasks performed by young lawyers are now best simulated in an online classroom.").

30. Anahid Gharakhanian et al., *Achieving Externship Success: An Empirical Study of the All-Important Law School Externship Experience*, 45 S. Ill. U. L.J. 165, 215 app. A (2021) (listing the various skills that new lawyers need).

31. *Id.*

32. Huffman, *supra* note 2, at 62.

33. *See, e.g.*, Student 1, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author) ("Or split the class into three groups of twelve or of ten or what have you, so that you have that synchronous time. And maybe students can choose, like there's a Monday one, a Wednesday one, and a Friday one at these different times and the TAs will be there. And so then you can hop on and ask your questions or have your discussion. I think that would be viable.").

34. *See* Canvas, *supra* note 2; Blackboard, https://www.blackboard.com/en-eu/teaching-learning (last visited Oct. 15, 2021) [https://perma.cc/SU44-MCJH].

reactions to the course material, this is not possible to do in an asynchronous online course. Even in a synchronous online course, it may be more difficult to read students through a computer screen and not all students will be visible on the computer screen in a synchronous session. In larger courses especially, the screen is split among students or they may have their cameras off.[35] Thus, multiple formats are helpful in online courses.

4.   Being Disorganized

Being disorganized or unstructured in online teaching is a major mistake. In live courses, for example, professors occasionally do not teach according to a syllabus, but instead wait to see how far they get with the material as the semester progresses for an organic approach to learning. This is not possible or desirable in an online course, the arc of which should be planned in advance because the course material must be carefully organized and divided to build knowledge over the course of a semester.

Furthermore, disorganization makes it more likely for both professors and students to overlook certain essential aspects of an online course. For example, it is easier to lose track of assessments without a system for handling incoming and outgoing assignments, which are more prevalent in online courses to ensure student learning.[36]

The importance of organization stretches into nearly every aspect of online course planning. For example, just because there is no time slot for an asynchronous online course does not mean that it should not be on a schedule. On the contrary, professors should keep a schedule of modules and assignments so that students know what to expect. Similarly, synchronous online courses should run as scheduled to prevent schedule conflicts for students.

Examples of online course features benefiting from scheduling include regular weekly course messages to students on the same day each week, predetermined synchronous sessions or online office hours, and consistent deadlines for students—such as required submissions on the same day of each week. As one student in the focus group summed it up:

> So, for me, it was like, I really have to know when my deadlines are, when I need to log on and submit something. And so, [the online course] was a little more logistically, I would say, rigorous, but not in difficulty. It was just in organizational rigor that was different from all live classes I'm in.[37]

5.   Not Engaging with Students

Professors teaching online must have a system for engaging with their students in the learning process, individually if possible. One student in the focus group noted:

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35.   Sarah J. Schendel, *The Pandemic Syllabus*, 98 DENV. L. REV. FORUM 1, 9 (2020).

36.   *See supra* Part 3.

37.   Student 3, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

I think the online learning would have to have a professor that's willing to be accessible. Either accessible in that they would respond to you, electronically, or that they would have office hours so that you could do a check-in. So, I think that whoever would format an online class would have to be someone that students could reach out to, because it is a different environment and you are relying on feedback that you would get from that professor that you're not seeing face to face, in each class.[38]

Without engagement, students may not feel that they receive the most value from an online course.[39] For example, one student in the focus group observed, "I feel like, if I'm in class, I'm paying to have this interaction with this professor. And so having to do, like you throw it online and you have to do a case brief. That's not the same as learning online."[40]

One only has to look to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to see the importance of student engagement. MOOCs have a famously high failure rate, although many of them use best practices for online teaching, such as short video lectures.[41] However, one thing many MOOCs necessarily lack is engagement from the professor due to their sheer number of students.

In terms of engaging students synchronously online, professors can call on students, poll them, or quiz them. In Zoom, professors can do break-out groups and enter into each one.[42] Professors should ensure that they have engaged with each student over the course of the semester by keeping track of participation or scheduling class discussants in advance.

In terms of engaging students asynchronously online, professors can do so in a variety of ways, such as assessments and email, or even short video responses to student work. Not all of these methods need to be burdensome on the professor. For example, professors could use automatically-graded quizzes that return results to students immediately upon submission. Alternatively, professors could send course-wide emails to students commenting on general trends in the students' performances. For this, professors can monitor their course analytics

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38.   Student 3, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

39.   *See, e.g.*, Jacqueline D. Lipton, *Distance Legal Education: Lessons from the *Virtual* Classroom*, 60 IDEA: L. REV. FRANKLIN PIERCE CTR. FOR INTELL. PROP. 71, 96 (2020) ("Ideally, an online class size where student participation is required probably shouldn't be more than about twenty students maximum. Even this can be pushing an instructor's limits to be able to give necessary attention to each student. Discussion boards can become very unwieldy and, even with interactive video or text chat software that allows synchronous discussion, chats with more than fifteen to twenty students can become difficult to manage."). One student in the focus group confirms from experience: "So, yeah, it was a little painful to do a discussion board with over a hundred students. I'd say even over twenty students is hard to do." Student 4, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

40.   Student 1, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

41.   For example, free MOOCs at edX averaged less than 10% completion rates in 2016. Doug Lederman, *Why MOOCs Didn't Work, in 3 Data Points*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Jan. 16, 2019), https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/01/16/study-offers-data-show-moocs-didnt-achieve-their-goals [https://perma.cc/MM7A-8N7S].

42.   *Enabling Breakout Rooms*, ZOOM, https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476093-Enabling-breakout-rooms [https://perma.cc/KT9B-LUEQ].

on their platform, if available, to help guide their response to students. Even ungraded assignments contribute to students' learning despite being low-stakes.[43] As one focus group student pointed out, "I'm sure there's a way to do it where a student doesn't have to be graded on every little set."[44] Finally, to avoid the around-the-clock online culture, professors could communicate to their students when they will be online and how long they need in order to respond to student questions.

Given the faculty time required for student engagement, student enrollment in online courses should be capped. As one focus group student pointed out, "I like when online classes don't have a whole lot of people, depending on the type of assignments for the online class, so when one class has 70 people in it, makes it a little more competitive and harder to talk about discussions and everything."[45] On the other hand, students expressed frustration at being unable to enroll in popular online courses: "I think that they can be designed to be less professor work-intensive, and be able to accommodate more people easily. They can easily automate more things, and if they were spending less time grading voice thread assignments, they probably could afford more people in the class."[46] Yet another student suggested that to keep students from complaining about not getting into popular online courses, "Just keep [an online cap] as a policy so that students know that that's the cap and it's not go[ing to] get bigger."[47] A compromise might be to run two sections of the same online course or to run the course each semester, thereby giving the professor credit for teaching large numbers of students and recognizing the time commitment required by proper student engagement.

CONCLUSION

In sum, there are several common pitfalls to online teaching. These include over-assigning work, giving lectures that are too lengthy, not engaging in multiple formats of learning, being disorganized, and not engaging with students. These common mistakes are understandable given that professors have taught live for generations and online teaching is comparatively new.[48] Indeed, while the internet dates back only to the 1990's, traditional law school teaching methods have been used for centuries.[49] Nonetheless, with some planning, professors

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43. *See* Olympia Duhart, *"It's Not for a Grade": The Rewards and Risks of Low-Risk Assessment in the High-Stakes Law School Classroom*, 7 ELON L. REV. 491, 493 (2015) (explaining that summative assessments are graded while formative assessments are ungraded).

44.   Student 4, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

45.   Student 5, Focus Group 2 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

46.   Student 7, Focus Group 2 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

47.   Student 4, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

48.   Dutton et al., *supra* note 4, at 498–99 ("[L]aw schools have operated according to one model for more than a century: the face-to-face course where 'students prepare for class by reading assigned texts or completing other assignments, then attend class where the teacher leads a Socratic dialogue, facilitates a discussion, or presents a lecture.' Like all institutions that have a traditional way of doing things, law schools are resistant to change.").

49.   Huffman, *supra* note 2, at 59. *See also supra* note 22 and accompanying text.

can offer a productive and enjoyable online experience for their students. This will become increasingly important as students begin to rely on online education as a part of their studies.[50]

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50.   *See, e.g.*, Student 6, Focus Group 2 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author) ("So for me, the online classes just give more flexibility with my schedule, and it always kind of sucks when I look at the schedule every semester, and I'm like, 'Well, I've already taken those three classes that are being offered online, so I can't take an online class,' or 'Oh, these aren't interesting to me. These are really random topics,' I don't know. So like seeing more options and seeing more classes."); Student 7, Focus Group 2 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author) ("My biggest complaint is the lack of [online] offerings, is how little we have. I wish there was more and that there was more options available in that regard, instead of the classes filling up really quick, so you don't even have the option of taking one. That's very discouraging. Other than that, it really depends on the professor, but I would honestly say I've only had one where I'm just kind of meh."). One focus group student said starkly, "If I'm choosing between the same . . . professor, same class? I would do online." Student 1, Focus Group 3 (Apr. 12, 2018) (on file with the author).

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APPENDIX A

**Mid-Semester Survey in Online Trusts & Estates
Administered in Spring 2015, Spring 2016, and Fall 2016**

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1) What about this course is working well for you?
2) What about this course is not working well for you?
3) What is your most AND least favorite type of online activity – discussion boards, quizzes, polls, or sample essays & answers? Please explain.
4) Would you take another online class in the future? Why or why not?

Focus Group Guide: Assessing Student Engagement and Learning in Law School Online Courses

<u>Preliminary Comments</u>

Mr. Jerolimov will introduce himself and Ms. Long. He will provide potential subjects with the informed consent document. He will provide time to read the document and ask questions. He will answer any questions. He will collect all signed consent forms before beginning the FG session. Any student not wishing to participate after reading the consent form will be excused.

After consent forms have been collected and any potential subjects excused, Mr. Jerolimov will briefly explain the mechanics of the FG session. Namely, he will serve as the moderator posing questions that should be used to prompt conversation among the FG participants. This is not an interview; the goal is to stimulate interaction and thinking among the participants.

Mr. Jerolimov will also remind participants that he and Ms. Long will keep their identities and comments during the session confidential. He will also ask that participants not share information that occurred during the session with others so that everyone can feel confident in speaking freely.

<u>Introductions of FG Participants</u>

Mr. Jerolimov will explain that participants will not be identified in any publications based on this research, nor be identified to Professors Dutton and Ryznar. Nevertheless, Mr. Jerolimov will ask participants to identify themselves by name so that Mr. Jerolimov and Ms. Long may keep records of the session. To ensure that participants meet the criteria for the study, he will also ask participants to state how many online courses they have taken at IU McKinney and when they took those courses.

1. What is your name?
2. How many online courses have you taken at IU McKinney?
3. During what year or years did you take online courses at IU McKinney?

Online Versus Live for Student Engagement and Learning: Launch Questions to Stimulate Conversation and Interaction

Before posing specific questions, Mr. Jerolimov will remind participants that the research does not require them to name particular professors and courses and that their comments can be more general in nature.

He will also inform participants that their responses are neither right nor wrong; participants can also disagree with views expressed by other participants.

1. You have all taken at least one online class at IU McKinney and many live classes. How do you compare the online experience to the live experience in terms of **student engagement** – being engaged in learning the course material? Be specific. (Again, there is no need to mention names or courses. You could mention types of activities in online or live classes that you feel do or do not enhance student engagement with the material instead.)

2. You have all taken at least one online class at IU McKinney and many live classes. How do you compare the online experience to the live experience in terms of **student learning** – actually learning the course material? Do you feel students learn more or less in one environment or the other? Be specific about what learning was (or was not) improved, and why you think it was (or was not) improved. (Again, there is no need to mention names or courses. You could mention types of activities in online or live classes that you feel do or do not enhance student engagement with the material instead.)

3. As students who have taken one or more online classes at IU McKinney, do you have any views about whether the school's online classes are more or less rigorous (however you wish to define that term) than the live classes at IU McKinney?

4. As students who have taken one or more online classes at IU McKinney, do you have any views about whether particular types of students benefit more or less from online or live classes in terms of student engagement or learning?

Online Programming Generally: Launch Questions to Stimulate Conversation and Interaction

1. As students who have taken one or more online classes at IU McKinney, do you have views as to the primary reasons why law students at this school may wish to take a class online – as opposed to live?

2. As students who have taken one or more online classes at IU McKinney, would you recommend that students take online classes at the law school? Why or why not? Be specific.

Strengthening Online Programming Generally: Launch Questions to Stimulate Conversation and Interaction

1. As students who have taken one or more online classes at IU McKinney, what advice would you share to help make that programming as strong as possible in terms of engaging students and enhancing student learning of

material? In particular, are there any specific activities or teaching methods that you believe are particularly helpful to student engagement and learning in the online learning environment?

2. As students who have taken one or more online classes at IU McKinney, do you believe law students could benefit from more online programming? Why or why not? Be specific.

3. Students in online courses do the work on their own time. As students who have taken one or more online classes, how were you motivated to do the work? Were you self-motivated? Or did the course structure or activities motivate you to do the work and learn the course material?

Overall Conclusion About IU McKinney Online Programming: Launch Questions to Stimulate Conversation and Interaction

1. Overall, what is your assessment of the quality of IU McKinney's online programming? Give reasons why you conclude as you do.

Open-Ended

1. Anything else you would like to share about IU McKinney's online programming as regards student engagement and learning?

2. Any other recommendations about the online programming at IU McKinney? (E.g., more courses online? More of some types of courses online? More courses during the summer or not? Why?)