From 0 to 60 in Two Years: Warner Online Start-up

How an entrepreneurial approach informed the launch of online courses at Warner

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November 20, 2015
Overview

• **The Warner Online Start-up story:**
  – Evaluating the opportunity and making the decision to pursue it
  – Planning and gathering resources
  – Launching the initiative
  – Growing and sustaining the initiative

• *Key entrepreneurial practices in action*
Warner Online Start-up Story

Evaluating the opportunity

• Why not before:
  – Concern about quality of online courses
  – Lack of a champion
  – Lack of critical mass of interested faculty
  – Concerns about cost
  – Competing projects

• Why now (2013):
  – Enrolment drop
  – New AVP for Online Learning
  – Technology advances - and their impact on cost and quality
  – Dean’s personal experiences of online learning
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Planning and Gathering Resources

Key planning questions:

- Which courses should be put online first?
- Who will teach them?
- What technology is needed?
- What “support” is needed? (and who will provide it?)

Key resources:

- Dean as “champion”
- Support from AVP of Online Learning
- Part-time “instructional designer”/faculty
- “Creating our own” online instructors
- Blackboard (w/ Collaborate)
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Launching the Initiative (2013-14)

17 online offerings including:
• Electives (10) + required (4+3)
• Required and electives of MS in Health Profession Education
• Sequence of Online Teaching courses

Online instructors:
• Very experienced (2); Somewhat experienced (2); Novice (10)

Student response:
• 257 enrolled
• High satisfaction
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Growing and Sustaining the Initiative

- Establishing policies and practices for online instruction
- Securing faculty and students’ “buy in”
- Continuing to offer strategically chosen new electives and required courses
- Launching “low-residency” programs (12+)
- Developing new online instructors through the Certificate in Online Teaching
- Developing internal capacity to support online course design and implementation
Warner Online Start-up

Entrepreneurial Mindsets and Practices Used

• Recognizing and valuing “missing the boat” risks
• Decision made despite initial lack of “resources in hand” (internal expertise)
• Refining original idea through a systematic process of “evaluating the opportunity”
• Find a champion
• Using risk-management strategies such as:
  – Avoiding large start-up investments and costs
  – Pilot/start small and grow
  – Purposefully seeking buy-in of key constituents
• Launching the initiative quickly, with expectation of adapting it as needed
Q&A