

Tulane SoPA excels in online learning with help of in-house Learning Design and Development team

February 01, 2023 1:00 PM Alicia Jasmin
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From left, Tulane SoPA instructional designers Kayla Jutzi, Stoney Gaddy, Sr. and Ashlie Pincince (far right), discuss improvements to the online course development process with an attendee during the U.S. Distance Learning Association Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. (Photo from Tulane SoPA)

When students take online classes at the Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA), they are experiencing the result of a months-long collaboration between an in-house Learning Design and Development (LD&D) team, industry experts, and faculty.

The SoPA LD&D team has been supporting faculty in the creation of learner-centric online and hybrid courses since 2018 by facilitating online course development workshops based on the Wiggins and McTighe method of Backward Design—a practice that suggests course design should begin with the desired learning outcomes established by program faculty rather than the selection of books or other materials.

In 2021, the SoPA LD&D team refined the workshop's workflow, process, and timeline to allow faculty members the opportunity to think more holistically about their courses. Each course is designed following research-based practices and evaluated using standards established by Tulane SoPA and [Quality Matters](#), a global leader in quality assurance for digital teaching and learning environments.

Backward Design to the Future
Disrupting the Course Development Timeline

Assessment
The CDDE assessment model focuses faculty on the assessment of student skills rather than the content and program development. This focus, if utilized, allows an instructor to create a course that is designed to meet the needs of the student rather than the needs of the instructor. The CDDE model is designed to be a guide for faculty to create a course that is designed to meet the needs of the student rather than the needs of the instructor.

About & End Pages
In the CDDE model, the end pages are the most important. Each module starts with an outcome page with module learning objectives and concludes with a course page that summarizes the learning objectives and end page.

Course Planner Part II
Faculty begin to fill out the end page module to establish a clear understanding of the end page module content and structure. Each module includes a learning objective, a list of outcomes, and a list of activities that will be used to assess the outcomes.

Course Planner Part I
Faculty begin to fill out the end page module to establish a clear understanding of the end page module content and structure. Each module includes a learning objective, a list of outcomes, and a list of activities that will be used to assess the outcomes.

Historical Perspective
In 2018, Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) developed a Course Development Workshop (CDW) to help faculty members design and develop high-quality courses. The CDW was designed to be a guide for faculty to create a course that is designed to meet the needs of the student rather than the needs of the instructor.

Unique Features
From the beginning, the CDW intentionally made the best practices of a well-designed online course and implemented them for the best learning experience. All modules and their materials are complemented by learning language that fits the assessment of the unique features of the online learning environment.

Examples of Success
The new timeline and workflow in the CDW have increased completion rates. In one semester, the CDW was completed in 2021, and in the next semester, completion rates increased to 85%. Some faculty were surprised that course faculty could be successful in completing the CDW in a shorter time frame.

Instructional Materials
In addition to course content, faculty might want to consider the following: reading, writing, and other learning materials that are relevant to the course. Faculty should consider the needs of the student when selecting materials. Faculty should also consider the needs of the instructor when selecting materials.

Lecture & Media
In the CDDE model, the faculty and learning objectives are the most important. Each module starts with an outcome page with module learning objectives and concludes with a course page that summarizes the learning objectives and end page.

Engagement
In the CDDE model, the faculty and learning objectives are the most important. Each module starts with an outcome page with module learning objectives and concludes with a course page that summarizes the learning objectives and end page.

Providing Orientation
In the CDDE model, the faculty and learning objectives are the most important. Each module starts with an outcome page with module learning objectives and concludes with a course page that summarizes the learning objectives and end page.

Tying it Together
In the CDDE model, the faculty and learning objectives are the most important. Each module starts with an outcome page with module learning objectives and concludes with a course page that summarizes the learning objectives and end page.

Faculty Quotes:
 "Thinking about the assessment up front has definitely helped me understand the course better and the goals I need to achieve." - SoPA Faculty Member
 "The course design process was great. The support from SoPA was excellent. I was able to get my course up and running in a shorter time frame. I was able to get my course up and running in a shorter time frame." - SoPA Faculty Member
 "I had several ongoing meetings with SoPA and the support was excellent. I was able to get my course up and running in a shorter time frame. I was able to get my course up and running in a shorter time frame." - SoPA Faculty Member

DOWNLOAD

Ilianna Kwaske, PhD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, developed the Tulane SoPA LD&D team to help push Tulane SoPA to the forefront of online learning while designing high-quality online courses at scale. The decision has proven popular among working professionals and nontraditional students who require flexibility to reach their goals. Tulane SoPA has been offering classes online for more than 15 years, but since Kwaske started in 2017 the number of courses offered in an online

format has jumped from 50 per semester to nearly 250 each semester.

“It was important to first establish standards and policy for distance education at Tulane SoPA to have consistency in how we thought of online teaching and learning and the kinds of faculty-student and student-student experiences we wanted to create,” says Kwaske. “Then, we assembled a team of instructional designers, technologists, and media content developers to support and shepherd our faculty through the process of creating high-quality courses.”

Ronni Tyger, EdD, director of the LD&D team, says the process and model used to create courses has been so successful among students and faculty that they are continuing to expand with the creation of new online degrees and courses within SoPA.

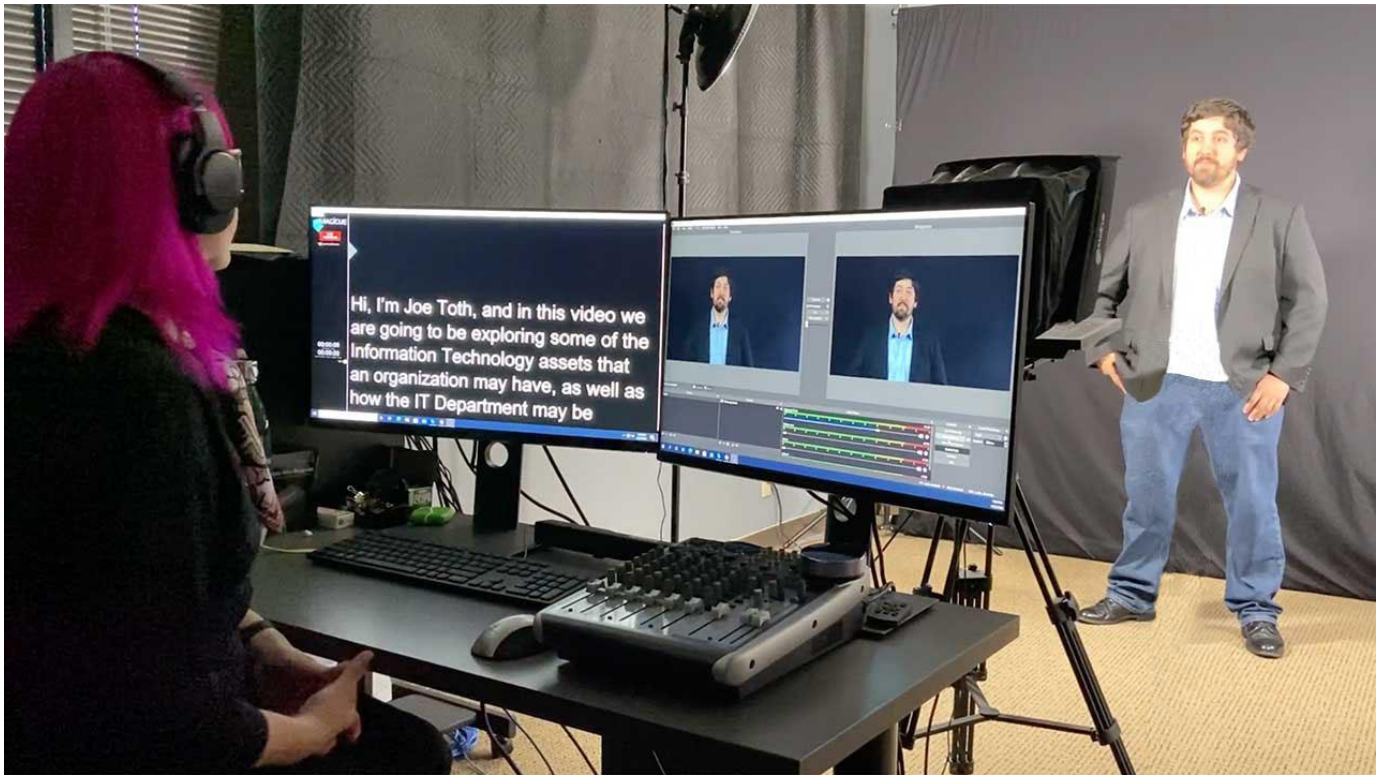
“Our talented instructional design and media team collaborates with faculty to develop between 75-100 courses each year.,” said Tyger. “We have been able to create learner-centric experiences for our students and we will continue to serve as designers of the learning journey.”

Tulane SoPA has a full recording studio and lightboard to capture faculty presentations, interviews, lectures, or podcasts. These resources have been shared with faculty and staff from other schools and units at Tulane.

Since courses are often based on real-world scenarios, faculty are encouraged to keep content up-to-date by refreshing course materials every three years, at minimum. The Tulane SoPA LD&D team has also developed a process for tracking improvements and enhancements made by faculty to online courses each semester.

“Because the process for developing online courses is so intentional, many faculty members over the years have told me they have become better teachers—online and in-person—after going through our online course-development workshop,” says Kwaske. “Starting with the end in mind, our faculty and LD&D team work together to create engaging, interactive, learning experiences for our students.”

Visit SoPA’s website to learn more about [online learning at Tulane SoPA](#). Tulane faculty can request assistance by emailing rttyger@tulane.edu.



Lauren Andress Ratcliff, LD&D media content manager, films Tulane SoPA Information Technology professor, Joe Toth, for an introduction to a video for an asynchronous online lesson.