Hybrid/Blended Learning Work Group Recommendation

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Background

Portland Community College has been offering the hybrid instructional method for over a decade with limited support on both online and classroom sides. There has been a recent increase in popularity for this modality and a corresponding need for additional institutional support for faculty and students participating in hybrid instruction. Given the growth of the metro region and increases in traffic, challenges with parking, concern about space utilization and PCC's plan to equitably improve student success, now is the right time to expand this modality with proper support. Research shows that student success rates in hybrid courses are on par with classroom and online rates. Andragogical reasons for offering this modality should focus on what is best for student learning. Research, along with our own faculty survey input, shows that the hybrid modality can be a great cross between fully online and face-to-face classes, and PCC students surveyed made it clear that the modality fits their busy lives. Hybrids provide opportunity by improving access to quality education for students of all identities. It is more feasible for students with family and work obligations to participate in the physical classroom once or twice a week instead of the full instructional time.

The charge of this work group has been to explore the benefits and challenges involved in offering hybrid/blended courses at PCC, and make a recommendation for our future path, including what would be needed to properly support this mode of instruction. The work group consisted of 14 members, including a strategic combination of faculty, department chairs, deans, and Online Learning staff. Work group members have been enthusiastic about participating in this important explorative project. Our goal has not been to set policy, rather to make recommendations based on in-depth research.

During the past 7 months, we have researched a vast collection of literature on hybrid learning, surveyed or interviewed 18 other institutions that offer hybrid instruction, surveyed over 120 PCC faculty and department chairs involved in offering hybrid learning, and over 140 students participating in hybrid courses. There are currently about 200 courses using the CLWEB designation every term at PCC, generally with little support and a low degree of student awareness of the hybrid course concept. Implementing the recommendations below will lay the foundation for a program that effectively supports the various components needed to offer hybrid courses at Portland Community College.

Research Highlights

Benefits

- Potential for higher quality learning - the online portion engages students in the foundations of the topic, and the "in-class" portion allows for engaging hands-on activities to apply the information.
- Provides students with flexibility in their schedules. It's the best of both worlds being able to interact with the instructor and students in the class while having the flexibility to plan when to engage in the online components.
- Some students perform better with some face-to-face time with the instructor and other students on a weekly basis, and the hybrid format allows for that opportunity.
- Departments have the potential to coordinate scheduling in ways that improve student access to degrees and certificates along with making more efficient use of classroom space.

Challenges

- No common definition of hybrid courses.
- Lack of student and advisor awareness about what hybrid courses are, how they are designated in the schedule, and lack of information about expectations and how to use Brightspace.
- Some students might not have access to a computer or internet service.
- Time management: Hybrids require solid motivation and good time management skills in order to plan when to engage in the online components.
- Clarity for students about the expectations for completing the online and classroom components.
- Support for instructor training and guidance on the design and delivery of hybrid courses is limited. There is no guidance on how to effectively integrate the online and classroom components.
- Confusion about designing the appropriate amount of instructional time into the online portion of the course.

- Instructors need to be proficient in both the online and classroom modalities, and little guidance is provided for either.
- Maintaining quality standards for hybrid course design and delivery.

Faculty Perception

- Faculty appreciate the flexibility allowed for by hybrid courses, both in terms of their own course design and the improved access for students, especially those who are working or have other time commitments.
- There are times when the subject matter really lends itself to alternative forms of instructional delivery.
- Hybrids provide an environment where the student is in control of his/her learning. Students learn to be self motivated in this type of format, and it can lead to self-reliance.
- The classroom contact can help with student success - improved retention.
- Focus on student learning benefit, not on the administrative need.

Student Perception

The vast majority of student comments regarding hybrids were quite favorable showing that they really appreciate the hybrid option. Examples:
- "It's a great opportunity, and I think it's important to give students this option because a lot of students have many responsibilities such as jobs, children, etc."
- "You can get the best of both the classroom experience and the online learning experience. Each has its own benefit. For example, being in class helps you clarify what you don't understand. It also provides an outlet to interact with other students and build a constructive learning environment. The online experience gives you the freedom to choose how and when to do work, which is especially beneficial if you have other responsibilities. So, a hybrid class combines these two experiences in a way that leads to better success."
- It definitely forces you to stay on top of things and teaches great motivational skills."

Recommendations

These are categorized by thematic areas that start by stating the problem, followed by the recommendation(s), and then the estimated cost level in terms of funding and workload for existing staff.

Offer this mode?

Problem/Question: Is this type of instructional mode one that should continue to be offered at PCC? (assuming more clarity to the definition, approach, communication...)

Recommendations:
1. Continue not only to offer, but also to market and improve support for this modality due to the benefits noted above. Provide targeted information about what hybrid classes are, the benefits, how to find them in the schedule as well as guidance for faculty about developing hybrid classes.
2. Establish guidelines and promote best practices for teachers of hybrids.
3. Use a more intentional, planned approach, and look for opportunities for helpful coordination of scheduling. Promote awareness that some subjects might fit well into the hybrid modality.

Cost level: Some cost; some additional workload for existing staff

Terminology

Problem: We need to use a consistent name for these courses at PCC, and CLWEB is not understood.

Recommendations:
4. The College should standardize on the term "Hybrid."
5. Consider additional designations of instructional modality beyond "hybrid" and "online" in the future. Other options could include classroom, web-enhanced, web-required… There was not consensus among our group on adding these designations, but this should be explored more in the future. When the instructional mode options are well advertised and used consistently throughout the college, all of our students will benefit as they will be able to choose the learning style that fits best.

Cost level: No cost; little additional workload for existing staff

Definition

Problem: People are using the term hybrid/CLWEB in a variety of ways. A consistent definition will help improve communication, scheduling and marketing.

Recommendation:
6. A hybrid course includes both regularly scheduled on-site classroom meetings, and significant online out-of-classroom components that replace regularly scheduled class meeting time. There needs to be a reduction in classroom "seat" time in order to be classified as a hybrid. The ratio may be recommended by the instructor, the SAC, or the FDC through an intentional design process and should be agreed upon by the Division Dean. The exact ratio is not prescribed, though it is frequently 50/50, and it is typically between 25% and 75% in either direction. Other options are possible depending on the

direction of the SAC or FDC. Some SACs might want to suggest or even set a common ratio for the SAC.

Cost level: No cost; some additional workload for existing staff for promotion, some SAC/department time

Instructor/student contact hours

Problem: Contact hour definitions are vague with hybrids. How can we clarify expectations for instructors? For students? The course design needs to include enough instructional activities to be the equivalent of the class time released, in addition to the "homework" hours. As it is, there are no standards for "seat time" vs. online time.

Recommendation:
7. The federal and NWCCU definitions of a credit hour require that a student be engaged in 30-36 hours of learning for each credit awarded. "Hours of learning" or "student engagement" includes both the time a student spends in class, and the estimated time that is required outside of class - in preparation and independent work- in order to be successful in the class.

   For hybrid courses, the sum of class time + time for required online activities replacing class time should equal the amount of class time for a typical face-to-face class. In both cases, there is an additional amount of "study time" per week that is equal. Here is an example, assuming a 3 credit class:

	Hybrid	Typical F2F
Class meetings per week	1	2
Classroom minutes per week	90	180
Required online activity minutes per week	120	30
*Recommended # study minutes per week	330	330
Total time per week	540	540

*This is in addition to class meetings and required online activities. It may include required reading, using paper or online study resources, reviewing notes, prep for quizzes and exams, practice exercises, completing assignments. (The number is based on

2 x 60 minutes per credit x 3 credits = 360, minus 30 minutes for required online activity work assigned to F2F students as well.)

Cost level: No cost; little additional workload for existing staff

Student expectations, workload, and readiness

Problem: The expectations for student workload are vague at the point of registration. What are the expectations, and how are those best communicated? Students need clear information about the course format and expectations, including attendance, deadlines, which assignments are due online and which in class. Many students do not have the necessary skills in using D2L. They also might not be aware that this instructional mode requires solid motivation and strong time management skills in order to be successful

Recommendations:
8. Create a PCC web page that describes instructional modes. Include the "hours" table above and/or a version of Clark College's graph depicting the tally of instructional vs outside study hours on that page.
9. Consider designing a tool with a purpose similar to the [Virtual Backpack](#) to help students self-identify their state of readiness for taking a hybrid class, including time management skills, self-motivation, etc. Alternatively, update the Virtual Backpack to include hybrids.
10. Develop or re-use an intro module for hybrid courses that covers how to use software. Make the training available, and include some sort of alert message when registering, but do not "require" the training as a pre-req.
11. The opening announcement in Brightspace for hybrid courses needs to identify the course format as hybrid and refer students to the syllabus for detailed information.
12. The syllabus of a hybrid course must clearly identify the hybrid format and the expectations, including attendance policy, a schedule of class meeting dates, activities and assignments, due dates, which assignments are due online and which in class, and information about which type of activities will be done in class and which online. Common information identifying the course as a hybrid should be included as boilerplate language in the syllabus, likely in a separate template for hybrids. Use the "hours" table above as part of the syllabus.

Cost level: Low cost; significant additional workload for existing staff

Scheduling (coordination focus)

Problem: In some cases, administrative and/or faculty reasons for offering hybrids may take precedence over andragogical reasons, a focus on what's best for student learning. A lack of schedule coordination of hybrids can result in inefficient use of classroom space and less emphasis on design (f2f/online integration) for improved student learning and degree/certificate completion. Few departments/SACs are making planned use of hybrids to maximize space utilization or coordinate offerings to improve student learning and increase degree/certificate completion.

Recommendation:

13. Coordinate hybrid scheduling to support andragogy and improved student learning, to facilitate student degree/certificate completion, and to maximize classroom space by:
    a. scheduling courses by campus that would allow students to work toward a degree or certificate by coming to campus fewer times per week. For example, a student might be able to participate in 2 hybrid courses on a Tuesday instead of coming in twice a week.

    b. providing complementary, alternating offerings that would allow students to take courses within a program sequentially and/or across disciplines in a cohesive manner. Departments should look for such connections and consider potential good fits when scheduling.

    c. Implement a coordinated hybrid scheduling practice [similar to what OSU does](#).

Cost level: No cost; some additional workload for existing staff

Designation in schedule / Student awareness

Problem: The schedule lacks clarity due to a variety of notes regarding hybrids, inconsistent Banner entry practices, and formatting issues. Students usually do not receive an alert clarifying that they have signed up for a hybrid class. CLWEBs in the past got low enrollment partially because they always appeared at the bottom of the schedule. Also, the "course details" page was never available to CLWEB instructors.

Recommendations:

14. Use the approved wording in the "Definition" section of this document to consistently market the "hybrid" course in the schedule, in Banner and in system-wide materials used to market individual classes on all campuses. Stop using the term "CLWEB" and only use the term "hybrid" in all web and printed materials. (The code CLWEB may continue to be used behind the scenes, but the public term used is hybrid.)
15. Make "Course Details" available for all hybrid courses at PCC. Involve the PCC Web Team in updating Course Details to allow for hybrids. (Related future work group option: Consider allowing instructors to make their syllabus available or other potential options for getting important information to students in classroom courses prior to the start of the term.)
16. Instructors should communicate with students at least once in advance in order to clarify the hybrid format and expectations, so there's plenty of time for students to make an alternate choice.
17. Standardize the language used to describe "hybrid" in the notes area of the schedule, e.g. "Hybrid course: See Course Details for specific information." Instructors could specify the hours or online/face-to-face ratio in the notes, or more likely in the Course Details. Create suggested verbiage options for instructors to use.

18. Train administrative assistants and FDCs as needed on consistent Banner entry regarding hybrids and other modalities so that notes are consistent for students in the schedule. Entries need to be designed so they designate the proper number of hours.
19. Work with the web team to format the schedule so that the instructional mode is clear. Use an icon to designate "Hybrid" class or add a column with the instructional designation "Online," "Hybrid," or other modes as needed. (This can be pulled from the instructional method in Banner, or even from building codes.) Also with the web team, explore the option of adding an alert message when students register for a hybrid course, or as part of the confirmation when they register for any course.

Cost level: No cost; very high additional workload for existing staff

Advisor awareness

Problem: Advisors are not aware of what hybrids entail and the different structures of hybrids.

Recommendations:
20. Provide the "hybrid" marketing materials to all advisors and the advising department coordinators to ensure the message is consistently communicated to students. Include information about what students will need to be successful in a hybrid course.
21. If course descriptions are sent to advisors by individual departments, they should include a description of each course's modality, and for hybrids, an elaboration of how the hybrid modality is used by that class.
22. Promote awareness of the Course Details page to advisors. Once they are aware of hybrid courses, advisors can check the CD pages for more information.

Cost level: Some cost (marketing materials); some additional workload for existing staff

Faculty training and course design guidance

Problem: Specific training is not offered to hybrid instructors. There is no consulting on effective strategies for integrating the classroom and online components, course design, or making the online components accessible. Instructors are not eligible for the online instructor training. They are only invited to the occasional tool training sessions. No guidance is offered during the hybrid course design and instructional development process.

Recommendation:
23. Provide Brightspace training for instructors who are going to develop and/or teach hybrid sections. This training is especially important for those moving in the direction of classroom to hybrid. Training options include:
    a. Complete ITS training series
    b. Complete OIO training
    c. Create a branch of OIO training specific to hybrid instructors.

24. Provide guidance on planning online activity times as per federal requirements. Use a tool such as the [Hybrid Course Planning Guide](#) or a similar table that clearly maps outcomes and activities to time outlays.
25. Additional in-depth training for hybrid course instructors must include effective strategies for integrating the classroom and online components, hybrid course design, designing the syllabus and course schedule, and making the online components accessible. This training should be open to new and experienced hybrid instructors, though especially useful for new hybrid instructors.

    To meet this need, we propose 2 training options:
    a. A fast-track half-day option with an overview of hybrid course design
        i. Optional, though may be required by department chairs or deans
        ii. Professional development credit
    b. In-depth training such as a learning community approach in hybrid format or a version of the OIO training. This would be a much more in-depth option focusing on andragogy, course design, some technology, and instructional delivery.
        i. Optional, though may be required by department chairs or deans
        ii. Completion stipend offered, likely paired with Brightspace training and course design completion.
26. Course design and delivery guidance should be available for all instructors developing and teaching a hybrid for the first time. This should be available during the design process as well as during the first teach term. It could be in the form of
    a. an online or hybrid mode workshop series (as mentioned above)
    b. one or more 1-1 consultations with a mentor (could be a small team of mentors specifically trained to consult on hybrids, e.g. one at each campus focusing on the hybrid modality)
    c. 1-1 consultations with an instructional designer (ultimately one for each campus) to help with hybrids and online courses.
27. Designing and teaching hybrids involves both the classroom and online environments, and both parts need mentoring. Best practices in classroom teaching should be part of the focus. The mentor should be involved in visiting the class, shadowing the new instructor both online and in the classroom. Professional development connections can be established with the TLC.
28. Hybrid instructors need to have the opportunity for 1-1 tech support during the course design process. Much of this will come from the ITS and the Faculty Help Desk.

Cost level: High cost if training stipends or new hires; high additional workload for existing staff

D2L Template

Problem: We currently do not have a template designed with hybrids in mind.

Recommendations:

29. Develop a "template" that new hybrid developments can be built from as needed. (Using this template will be standard for new hybrids, though it will not be required for online courses moving to hybrid mode.)
30. Include the Introduction to Online Learning module (or similar) in the hybrid template. Compare with "Campus" intro module to determine what is needed.
31. Include boilerplate language in the hybrid syllabus template identifying the course as a hybrid. Include placeholder information for the expectations, attendance policy, a schedule of class meeting dates, activities and assignments, due dates, which assignments are due online and which in class, and information about which type of activities will be done in class and which online.

Cost level: No cost; significant additional workload for existing staff

Quality assurance & opportunity for feedback

Problem: There is no quality assurance or opportunity for feedback on the course design (including accessibility) before a course goes live. How should quality standards be maintained in future years?

Recommendations:
32. Develop a somewhat simpler model of a QM-like review for hybrid courses. These reviews should be conducted by the Faculty Department Chairs or the faculty mentors designated for hybrids. Make them required only for participants of the more in-depth hybrid training program (if offered), or as requested by department chairs or deans. Make them available to all instructors.
33. Establish a system to manage these at a department level.

Cost level: No cost; significant additional workload for existing staff

Helpdesk support

Problem: Helpdesk support is available for current hybrid instructors simply because they will help anyone who calls with D2L questions. However, if hybrids are promoted in a more intentional way, there might be a need for additional support.

Recommendation:
34. Track Helpdesk and ITS support needed as more instructors teach hybrids. We might need to consider additional staff in the future.

Cost level: Some cost if we eventually need to hire; some additional workload for existing staff, particularly ITS time.

Funding support

Problem: There is no funding designated for supporting the offering of hybrid courses, including training, design, quality assurance, and support. PCC does not currently charge any fees for hybrid/CLWEB courses in the way it does for WEB courses. Some faculty expressed that they do not want there to be additional costs for these courses.

Recommendation:

35. Funding will be needed for:
    a. Start Guide updates
    b. Training stipend for in-depth training/design option
    c. One hybrid faculty mentor for each campus - Faculty project rate hours
    d. One district-wide FT ID (with faculty experience) with hybrid focus (training, design, quality assurance, support), or
    e. One FT ID (with faculty experience) at each campus responsible for training and course design associated with both hybrid and online courses (d or e)
    f. OIO stipend for faculty if we make that an option

Cost level: High cost for new hires; significant additional workload for existing staff

Our Recommendation - By Level

Minimal level

Recommendation	Costs involved
Faculty participate in current Brightspace tool training through ITS	Staff time
Fast-track "overview" training only (e.g. 3-hr session) - optional	Funds needed for curriculum development and facilitating the training
Make consulting for design guidance available	Staff time
One hybrid mentor at each campus assisting with training and course design guidance	Faculty special project rate
One Instructional Designer (ID) district-wide with hybrid focus	New ID position

Moderate level

Recommendation	Costs involved
Faculty participate in current Brightspace tool training through ITS	Staff time
Specific hybrid design training - 2 options available: 1. Fast-track "overview" training (e.g. 3-hr session) - optional	Funds needed for curriculum development and facilitating the training
2. In-depth training focusing on whole design and development process. (Targets new instructors, but open to all. Eligibility: Instructors who plan to have at least 50% of their course online.)	Stipend after completing workshop and development of hybrid, e.g. $1,000.)(no course dev stipend in either scenario) Funds also needed for curriculum development and facilitating the training.
Make consulting for design guidance available	Staff time
Additional staff: 1. One hybrid mentor at each campus assisting with training and course design guidance	Faculty special project rate
2. One ID district-wide with hybrid focus	New ID position
3. Or one ID at each campus responsible for training and course design associated with both hybrid and online courses	Four new ID positions

High level

Recommendation	Costs involved
Faculty participate in FOOT and OIO training (or special version of OIO), along with online instructors	$600 completion stipend Additional staff time needed for facilitation
Specific hybrid design training - 2 options available: 1. Fast-track "overview" training (e.g. 3-hr session) - optional	Funds needed for curriculum development and facilitating the training

2. In-depth training focusing on whole design and development process. (Targets new instructors, but open to all. Eligibility: Instructors who plan to have at least 50% of their course online.)	Stipend after completing workshop and development of hybrid, e.g. $1,000.)(no course dev stipend in either scenario) Funds also needed for curriculum development and facilitating the training.
Make consulting for design guidance available	Staff time
Additional staff: 1. One hybrid mentor at each campus assisting with training and course design guidance. Should assist with OIO also, or we need more training facilitators.	Faculty special project rate
2. One ID district-wide with hybrid focus	New ID position
3. Or one ID at each campus responsible for training and course design associated with both hybrid and online courses	Four new ID positions

Future Steps

1. Determine structure of future implementation work group. Turn the process of moving forward over to that group.
2. Prioritize recommendations and next steps.
3. Analyze this effort further in terms of intentional planning related to Critical Race Theory.

Appendix A: [Faculty survey input]

Appendix B: [Student survey input]

Appendix C: [Other institutions]

Appendix D: [Resources]