Converting a Classroom Course to Online Format
Practical Strategies

1. As faculty begin the process of converting traditional classroom courses to an online format or creating new online courses, it is essential that they acquire a new mindset – to move toward a ***learner-centered approach***.

> A learner-centered approach places the student at the center of the education. In a learner-centered environment, students explore meaning, confront new knowledge, build links between new information and personal experiences, resolve inconsistencies, and create meaningful representations of new knowledge.

2. Adult learning theory needs to be an integral component throughout all of the stages of instructional design. Therefore, in the initial stage of course development, faculty will find it helpful to review some of the basic tenets of ***adult learning theory***.

> Adult learners are described as self-directed individuals, with varied and rich life experiences, who exhibit a readiness to learn, and learn more effectively in the context of application to real life. Faculty should keep in mind as they develop online courses for adults that their courses have the potential to "transform" the learner.

3. Faculty must also plan ways to bring online students together to establish an ***online learning community***. Successful online learning requires collaboration among the students.

> Collaboration contributes to higher order learning through cognitive restructuring or conflict resolution, in which new ways of understanding the material emerge as a result of contact with new or different perspectives.

4. The first stage of instructional design requires an ***analysis of the learner***.

> Faculty need to think about the age, educational background, and work experiences of students enrolling in this course. For students in higher education, and especially adult students, critical thinking and problem solving skills are essential outcomes. Therefore, techniques to elicit application, synthesis, analysis, and values clarification are necessary.

5. In the second stage, design and development, there is a need to clearly ***identify the instructor's goals*** for the adult learner.

> Faculty should reflect on the outcomes that students should demonstrate at the completion of the course. A review of Bloom's Taxonomy will be helpful in identification of behavioral objectives that reflect higher-level thinking. For transformational learning to occur, faculty should review and select objectives from both the cognitive and affective domains.

6. While reviewing the goals and objectives for a course, faculty should also consider how the **technology** available through the course management system and the Internet could assist them in achieving these goals.

7. With clearly defined goals, faculty must next **select content** that will serve as the basis of the learning experience. Decisions about content should be based on the appropriateness of the content to assist in meeting learning objectives.

   > When content is delivered in multiple ways, it also addresses different student learning styles and creates a more interesting course overall.

8. The traditional classroom focus on delivering content to the learner needs to be replaced with engaging students in **interaction**.

   > Examples of interactivity include <u>student interaction with course content</u> (textbook, faculty-generated lectures, web sites, simulations, or reserved readings), <u>student to student interaction</u> (message board discussions, chat rooms and group projects), <u>student and faculty dialogues</u> (journaling, reflections, papers, and feedback), and student to guest expert interactions (i.e. message board discussions, case studies, and other activities).

9. As faculty introduce each new learning activity, they must also keep in mind that students need **clear directions of the expectations**.

   > For example, if students are demonstrating their grasp of the content through participation in online discussions, they need to know how the faculty will determine participation points. Is participation evaluated on quantity or quality? Students' responses should reflect critical thinking and application. When students are assigned to work collaboratively on group projects, faculty guidance may be necessary the first time students attempt this online.

10. An important concept that should not be left out of the design and development of online courses is **"chunking"** of course content.

    > Dividing course content and learning activities into manageable chunks allows busy adults to more easily complete assignments and helps keep students engaged in the learning experience.

11. Higher order thinking requires an element of risk-taking. Faculty set this **tone** by trusting students to learn.

    > Faculty need to give students permission and even rewards for thinking "outside the box" (creative thinking –challenging authority -- beyond usual thoughts). One technique that promotes student risk-taking behavior is for faculty to set the example by taking the lead in self-exposure themselves.

12. As in the traditional classroom, ***evaluation*** is driven by the determination of the attainment of specific outcomes. How the specific outcomes are measured, however, may need a different approach in the web-based classroom.

> Conventional multiple choice, true/false, and short answer essay testing in the online environment can be appropriate to the course content. However, the technology allows faculty to evaluate student in numerous ways. Student participation online is in written form, captured by the course management system and available for evaluation purposes. Faculty have many opportunities to assess how each individual student has grasped the content and to what degree he/she can apply it to practice.