



eLearning ACUMEN

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a newsletter from the Office of Online & Extended Learning at MSUM

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Win-Win-Winning Strategies

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Last summer I thought a lot about the most impactful thing that I can do this academic year as MSUM's Dean of Online and Extended Learning (OEL). I find myself coming back to faculty – the beating heart of the university, critical for educating students and creating knowledge.

Last August, I told faculty and staff that I was committed to a Triple Bottom Line: good for students, good for faculty/staff, and good for programs and MSUM. If an idea or initiative doesn't benefit all three, we shouldn't pursue it. In 2016-17, the OEL collaborated with faculty, staff, and administrators across the institution to implement ideas that meet our "win-win-win" standard. Here are a few:

1. MSUM became a [SARA institution](#) in April. SARA is the shortened acronym for the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. Membership allows MSUM to market and offer online education to students in 47 SARA states. This agreement is
 - a. Great for students (who can access quality MSUM online programs at affordable tuition) and for local students (whose life circumstances take them to another state). Now students can persist and complete MSUM degrees, even as life changes.
 - b. Great for faculty and staff (who no longer need to spend precious time resources tracking down students and pursuing individual agreements with specific states).
 - c. Great for MSUM with its impressively expanded pool of potential students.
2. OEL developed Online Orientations for 18-Online students and for all online graduate and undergraduate students. These orientations are
 - a. Better for students (who now have on time, consistent, updated information to help them get on board, connected with the campus, and enrolled in classes so that they can begin to establish their identity as a Dragon and form relationships with faculty in their programs).

Win-Win-Winning Strategies

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- b. Better for faculty (who now can spend more time establishing relationships with new students and discussing program specific questions, rather than on routine, repetitive questions).
 - c. Better for programs (which now will capture more prospects by providing quick responses to assist students into their virtual classrooms in an efficient and caring way).
3. OEL launched an Instructional Design model for two MSUM online programs, which will ensure clean, consistent, navigable course designs across core courses, resulting in:
 - a. Fewer barriers for students and a more positive educational experience focused on what matters most: learning course content, developing skills, and establishing relationships with faculty and peers.
 - b. More time for faculty to focus on student learning and less time helping them with general course navigation and tedious “clicking work” in D2L Brightspace.
 - c. Programs strengthened by collaborative and considered decisions made by faculty across their curricula, and in concert with each other.

In 2017-18 we will demonstrate care for students, each other, and MSUM by launching many win-win-win projects and initiatives. One is a series of faculty development opportunities on the theme *Supercharge your Courses with D2L Brightspace*. These monthly workshops, short courses, and funded projects will focus on leveraging D2L Brightspace to improve the student learning experience and facilitate faculty goals.

To strengthen MSUM’s role in online education, let us pursue opportunities to invest in the care of our students: what programs and courses we offer, how we offer them, how we advise, how we address students on our websites and communications, the ease of student processes, etc. Let’s be creative and tireless in our commitment to show online students that we see them, value them, and want them to succeed.

When I was faculty, I treasured every opportunity to contribute to student success. It is now my honor to support faculty and staff as they demonstrate the heart of MSUM to our students and community. Thank you for the privilege to serve as your Dean of Online and Extended learning for a second year. I look forward to what we will accomplish together!



In the Spotlight

Meet the newest team member in Online & Extended Learning!

Heather Nesemeier is the Assistant to the Dean of Online & Extended Learning at Minnesota State University Moorhead. Prior to joining OEL, Heather served the MSUM campus in multiple roles. She worked in the School of Nursing & Healthcare Leadership for seven years, with the MSUM Faculty Association for eight years, and taught as an adjunct instructor on and off over the last nine years! Heather is an active member in her union, AFSCME, serving as a Steward, as well as on the Welcome Committee and the University Diversity Committee. When not at work, Heather enjoys gardening, reading, and giving back to her community with regular volunteer opportunities and organizations.



Please join us in welcoming Heather to Online & Extended Learning!



PD Picks

Light up your learning!

TEACH SMARTER Workshops

Supercharge Your Courses with D2L Brightspace

OEL and the Faculty Development Center are collaborating to offer a series of workshops to help you supercharge your courses! All sessions held in **LI 124** in the **FDC**; times vary.

- Integrating Library Services into D2L Brightspace
 - Thurs., Sept. 14, 1:30 PM
- Customizing Quizzes for Best Results
 - Wed., Oct. 25, 3:00 PM
- Exam Proctoring and Alternatives
 - Wed., Nov. 1, Noon
- Leveraging D2L Gradebook
 - Fri., Dec. 1, 2:00 PM
 - Tues., Dec. 5, 3:00 PM (*repeat session*)

Watch your email for registration links!

MOQI Webinars

[Minnesota Online Quality Initiative](#) is sponsoring **FREE** 1-hour webinars again this academic year. Pre-registration is required.

- [Learning Objectives: What, Why, Where & How](#)
 - Wed., Oct. 4, 12:00 PM
 - Details: <http://tinyurl.com/y8pg2ytu>
- [Increase Student Engagement Using Discussion Boards](#)
 - Wed., Oct. 25, 12:00 PM
 - Details: <http://tinyurl.com/y97g058a>
- [The ABCs of Assessment](#)
 - Wed., Nov. 1, 12:00 PM
 - Details: <http://tinyurl.com/ydbry3ow>
- [Lights, Camera, Action...Recorded Lectures](#)
 - Wed., Nov. 15, 12:00 PM

- Details: <http://tinyurl.com/ybguvxbc>

- [MediaSpace for Recorded Lectures](#)
 - Wed., Jan. 10, 12:00 PM
 - Details: <http://tinyurl.com/ybr8bkyy>
- [Tips to Improve Navigation, Usability, and Organization in Your Online or Blended Course](#)
 - Wed., Jan. 24, 12:00 PM
 - Details: <http://tinyurl.com/yaj6byt3>

QM Workshops

Improving Your Online Course (IYOC)

Choose from one of two sessions:

Session 1: September 26 – October 10, 2017
(*Registration closes Sept. 22*)

Session 2: November 7 – November 21, 2017
(*Registration closes Nov. 3*)

The IYOC is a 2-week online, asynchronous workshop. It explores the QM Rubric and provides a framework to improve the quality of online and blended courses. Participants use the QM Rubric to review their own online course and develop a course improvement plan. **Prerequisite:** must have an existing online course to examine during the workshop. (*Cost is \$35.***)

[Workshop details](#) (session 1): <http://tinyurl.com/y76jgj93>

[Workshop details](#) (session 2): <http://tinyurl.com/yar4h9qz>

Applying the QM Rubric (APPQMR)

October 24 – November 7, 2017
(*Registration closes Oct. 20*)

This online, asynchronous, 2-week workshop is QM's flagship workshop. It is intended for those who wish to gain a deeper understanding of the QM Rubric and process of course review. (*Cost is \$45.***)

[Workshop details](#): <http://tinyurl.com/ydg3oraz>

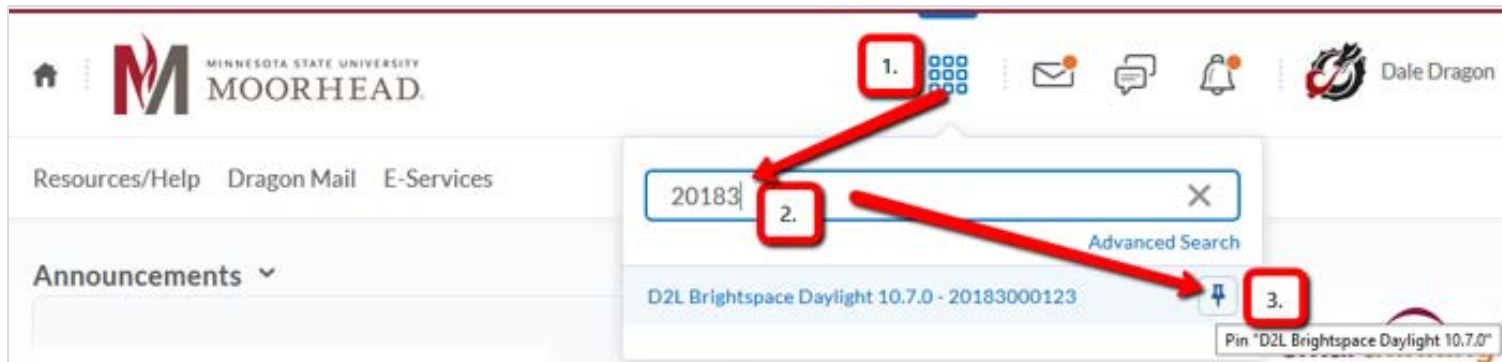
******Registration fees can be paid by the Office of Online & Extended Learning. [Email](mailto:catherine.artac@mnstate.edu) catherine.artac@mnstate.edu **prior** to registration to request a P.O. number and registration details.

D2L Brightspace gets Brighter with Daylight Experience

On June 6, 2017, D2L Brightspace was upgraded to version 10.7.0. This update included 9 months of iterative updates and new mobile friendly interface called "Daylight Experience".

The "Daylight Experience" is mostly a visual redesign that is modern, aesthetic, and responsive to the myriad devices in use today.

Courses are no longer organized by semester in the My Courses widget on the homepage. In this version, courses that are "pinned" appear in the widget. The best way to find and pin your courses is to (1.) click the "Select a course" button, (2.) search for your course (*fall courses start with the number 20183*), (3.) then pin them by clicking the Pin button.



Connect with Adobe Connect *to meet your web conferencing needs!*

Minnesota State has contracted with Adobe Connect, and **you and your students** have full access to its many features!

Adobe Connect is a **web conferencing** software that supports online meetings and collaborations, virtual classrooms, breakout groups, and large webinars. It is especially valuable for online programs and courses, but provides many opportunities for those working on campus as well. Here are some ideas of how you might find it useful:

- Collaborate with colleagues at other institutions or businesses.
- Allow students to work on team projects, even if they are not all on campus at the same time.



- *Deliver virtual presentation to a remote audience.*
- *Hold virtual office hours when you cannot meet in-person.*
- *Invite members to meetings who cannot make it to campus, and avoid stalling progress or missing their perspectives.*

What does it look like?

This [video overview](#) (13:21) on Adobe Connect will help you understand some of the features available (<https://www.connectusers.com/overviews/>).

How do I get started?

You may check out Adobe Connect at any time, and begin using it!

- Check out this [Video Overview](#) of how to access the portal. Additional support materials are available when you login to the service.
- Go to <https://webmeeting.minnstate.edu/> to access the [Minnesota State web conferencing](#) service.

How do I find help?

- Since this service is supported at the Minnesota State level, rather than locally, contact the State [ITS Service Desk](#) if you have a question or need assistance. With admin access, they will be best suited to answering your questions.
- If you would like a guided tour to familiarize yourself with this service, [register for the September 8 session now!](#) *Additional opportunities will be scheduled for the fall and spring terms.*
- You can find tips and other tutorials at the [Adobe Connect Community](#) (http://www.connectusers.com/learning_center/getting_started/).

Accessibility in Mind

Although the new academic year has begun, it is not too late to consider ways that you can make your current online and hybrid courses more accessible for students of all abilities.

Dr. Sheryl Burgstahler of the University of Washington provides some great suggestions in her article "20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course." In the article, Dr. Burgstahler related a story about working with another instructor back in 1995 to design a course "to be accessible to anyone, including students who were blind, deaf, or had physical disabilities." You see, her co-instructor is blind and uses a screen reader and speech synthesizer to read content presented on the computer. They chose to design their course from the beginning for accessibility. The students did not need to disclose if they had a disability as their needs were met from the start.

From that early beginning, Dr. Burgstahler has become a respected leader in the field of Universal Design in Education and the founder of the DO-IT Center (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology).

According to Dr. Burgstahler, "As they choose content, document formats, and teaching methods,

it is important for instructors to remember that potential students may have a wide variety of characteristics. These characteristics may relate to gender, race, ethnicity, culture, marital status, age, communication skills, learning abilities, interests, physical abilities, social skills, sensory abilities, values, learning preferences, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, etc."

But what does "accessible" mean with respect to an online course? According to the Office of Civil Rights, "accessible" means that a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally, and independently as a person without a disability.

That may seem like a tall order. You may be asking, "Where do I start?" It may be a bit overwhelming. It's tempting to simply ignore the issue until a student needing accommodations enrolls in your course, forcing you to scramble to produce the accessible content to meet the student's needs.

However, if we truly want MSUM to be inclusive and welcoming to all students, the best approach is to

work on making your courses accessible, even if you take a few steps at a time. Some of the items on Dr. Burgstahler's list may take more time (and funding), such as captioning. However, many ideas require easy fixes on your part to make your current content or course structure more accessible. Her article provides ideas on getting started and links for more information.

One great first step is to review your course materials for scanned documents. Did you scan an article or a few pages from a textbook to share with your class? Is it easy or difficult to read? Did you scan it as an image? Is a text format available so someone with vision issues can listen to it read to them using a screen reader? Is the document oriented correctly so students do not need to download and rotate it themselves? Is the material available in digital format that is already in an accessible format so you can provide a direct link? Keep in mind that a document scanned as an image is inaccessible to someone needing to use a screen reader. Moreover, if the image quality is poor, even students with perfect vision may have difficulties reading it.

Dr. Burgstahler offers a link in the article to the University of Washington's Creating Accessible Documents page. Their Accessible Technology team offers examples of poorly-scanned PDF documents and suggestions on how to create high quality, accessible scanned documents on their page [Creating High Quality Scans](http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/scans/) (<http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/scans/>).

If you are interested in finding ways to make your courses more accessible, please contact the Office of Online & Extended Learning to schedule a consultation.

Links

- [DO-IT Center](http://www.washington.edu/doit/)
<http://www.washington.edu/doit/>
- [20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course](http://www.washington.edu/doit/20-tips-teaching-accessible-online-course)
<http://www.washington.edu/doit/20-tips-teaching-accessible-online-course>
- [Office of Civil Rights](http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/requirements/legal-cases-by-issue/)
<http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/requirements/legal-cases-by-issue/>
- [Creating Accessible Documents](http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/) (University of Washington): <http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/>

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