Initial Comparator Research – Portland State University

(LMS = Desire2Learn, https://d2l.pdx.edu, administered by the Office of Information Technology, http://www.pdx.edu/oit/. Student tech support through OIT, faculty support through the Office of Academic Innovation, http://www.pdx.edu/oai/. Continuing education courses managed by the Center for Executive and Professional Education are offered through Canvas; https://pdxbs.instructure.com/).

General impression: Portland State's Office of Academic Innovation is rightly heralded as an advance, but its holistic approach does not fully compensate for the decentralized nature of online education at PSU in general. The lack of a centralized online unit, coupled with the resources and interest dedicated to OAI, suggests that the bulk of PSU's interest is in hybrid learning, or technology-enhanced classroom experiences, rather than online degree delivery per se. While some online degrees are offered, they are loosely coordinated; students would have to be very motivated to successfully pursue a PSU degree entirely from an off-site location. Still, investment in OAI seems progressive and a good model to explore further.

1) What services does this institution's Extension unit provide to campus partners?

Few, if any. Portland State's most "extension-like" unit is the Center for Executive and Professional Education (http://www.pdx.edu/cepe/), which offers non-credit courses and certificates for the Portland community. CEPE currently offers 16 certificate programs, largely in business-oriented topics. Their more obscure certificate programs clearly cater to the local market (including certificates in athletic and outdoor product management, the business of artisan food, and the business of craft brewing). The vast majority of these offerings are offered face-to-face, although several (5) of the craft brewing courses are currently delivered online via Canvas.

Additional continuing education is provided by several of PSU's colleges and schools. Within the Maseeh College of Engineering and Computer Science, for example, the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering offers several test preparation courses for engineers in the field (http://www.pdx.edu/cee/continuing-education). And the Graduate School of Education's Continuing Education unit (CEED; http://www.pdx.edu/ceed/) offers an array of programming, ranging from endorsements to certificates to degrees, in over 50 subfields. Of CEED's wide array of offerings, one licensure, two endorsements, four non-credit certificates, two graduate certificates, and two master's degrees can be completed online. An additional three licensures, five endorsements, five non-credit certificates, three graduate certificates, and ten graduate degrees can be completed at least in part online, or are offered in a blended format. Online education courses are delivered via PSU's Desire2Learn installation.

Finally, professional development in the form of noncredit education is offered by two transportation research centers at PSU (TREC, http://trec.pdx.edu/professional-development, and NITC, http://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/professional-development). While these are niche courses for working professionals, and they are delivered synchronously via web conferencing when technology is involved in their delivery, they are an interesting

example of the distributed, independent nature of continuing education within PSU's academic and research units.

2) Where is digital education housed? Are there separate units for online learning and blended or hybrid courses? Are technology and pedagogy combined or separate? How much of this effort is centralized?

Digital education at PSU manages to be both centralized and decentralized. Certainly, faculty development efforts in this area are centralized through the Office of Academic Innovation (more on that below). And while individuals seeking online learning can find a central hub, http://www.pdx.edu/psuonline/; that hub explains the distributed nature of e-learning on campus and instructs interested students to follow up with individual academic units.

Right now a wide variety of online courses and degrees are offered through various academic departments. Some of these offerings are more successful than others. (Hypothesis: this is largely because they must depend on departmental rather than centralized support. Some schools and colleges are more into it than others.)

Undergraduate: PSU's School of Business Administration offers an online bachelor's degree with concentrations in either Management and Leadership or Supply and Logistics Management (http://www.pdx.edu/sba/online-business-programs). These are 3-year degree completion programs that admit students with some prior college credit, earned at PSU or elsewhere. The online courses are at least partially delivered through synchronous web conferencing.

Similarly marketed is PSU's online bachelor's degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice (http://online.ccj.pdx.edu). With one bachelor's degree and four (undergraduate?) certificates on offer, CCJ has its own infrastructure for student support and appears to target degree completers (http://online.ccj.pdx.edu/resources/student-services-2/student-support/). It is unclear what applications are used to deliver these courses.

PSU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences offers 3 majors and 2 minors that can be completed entirely online (http://www.pdx.edu/clas/online-degree-offerings). These are clearly for students who have taken or will still be taking general education requirements in residence (PSU students have a four-year general education curriculum). Unlike the business degrees, there is not a special application process or a cohort model; this is instead for the motivated student who wishes to take the majority (but not all) of their PSU courses virtually in their junior and senior years.

Graduate: In addition to the graduate education offerings through the College of Education's Continuing Education unit, the master's in social work is offered in 3 delivery models (face-to-face in Portland, online via D2L, and distance learning at other sites around the state of Oregon; see http://www.pdx.edu/ssw/master-of-social-work). The MSW degree appears to have been slightly re-structured for each delivery option and may be a good working model of how to separate content from delivery. The School of

Business also offers an online master's in global supply chain management (http://www.pdx.edu/sba/ms-in-global-supply-chain-management).

In marked contrast to the well-regarded master's degrees from social work and business, the online master's degree and online graduate certificate in systems engineering (http://syse.pdx.edu) are currently running for students already enrolled, but are being discontinued due to low enrollment. No new students will be admitted to either program.

Other: There is an intriguing certificate available in the Business of Social Innovation; it appears to be open to PSU undergraduate and graduate students, as well as to members of the community at large (http://www.pdx.edu/impactentrepreneurs/certificate). This program is very similar to one that is being developed at UVa—four courses, mostly online with an experiential component, on a topic that is designed to attract people from across academic disciplines or professional fields.

Technology and pedagogy are linked at PSU, but not so much through online degree offerings or academic programming as through faculty development. The previously-mentioned Office of Academic Innovation (OAI; http://www.pdx.edu/oai/) was founded in 2013 after an internal reorganization and is led by a Vice Provost for Innovation and Student Success. OAI combines the best of a faculty development or teaching and learing office with comprehensive educational technology support. The office offers consultations on a wide variety of pedagogical topics, including teaching with technology. It puts on events on teaching, learning, and community engagement topics, facilitates faculty learning communities each year, supports faculty engaged in academic writing, and provides custom learning assessments. Technology appears to be integrated throughout. For example, they have just opened three media labs for video production: http://www.pdx.edu/oai/blog-entry/coming-soon-media-labs, and their support desk for faculty, which is just about to open, will provide holistic educational technology services: http://www.pdx.edu/oai/oai-faculty-support-desk.

3) What structures, formal or informal, are in place to encourage pedagogical innovation on campus? Is there any effort to centralize such activity?

See my notes on OAI, above. In addition to that office's pedagogical efforts (most obviously on view in their Knowledge Base, https://pdxtutorials.uservoice.com), several other centralized services exist at PSU: the Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion supports a faculty mentoring program (http://www.pdx.edu/diversity/psus-faculty-mentoring-program), and PSU's Library provides support for course design (http://guides.library.pdx.edu/onlinefaculty).

4) Where are instructional design and instructional technology housed? What pathways exist to guide faculty to instructional technology services? Is access to instructional technology support uniform across different faculty groups at the institution?

Instructional design and instructional technology live in the Office of Academic Innovation. There is a clear path to instructional technology services in OAI's new

faculty support desk. Access to instructional technology support appears relatively uniform.

5) At what administrative level are digital education initiatives, endorsed, supported, or made a fundraising priority? For example, does the institution count, encourage, or otherwise track student enrollment or participation in digitally-inflected (hybrid, blended, tech-enhanced F2F) courses? What institutional investments have been made in hybrid and/or blended learning?

> Top-down model with internal investment from offices at the presidential and provost levels. Sustained investment in hybrid learning at the central level, and in targeted online degrees at the college/school level. See also: http://www.rethink.pdx.edu.