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Teaching Online at a South Bronx Community College

Vasquez-Iscan, Elys [1]

[1] Hostos Community College, evasquez-iscan@hostos.cuny.edu

Abstract

The focus of this article is to discuss how Hostos Community College of the City University of New York, located in an underserved community such as the South Bronx, is gaining mastery in education technology and online teaching. The article aims to provide an overview of how Hostos compares to the national trend of community colleges and how its students, who mostly start as remedial students, are dispelling held beliefs in higher education that community college students are not able to succeed in online courses. The article also gives insight to an area that is largely unexplored, which is faculty perceptions of online teaching and what higher education administrators can do to support faculty in online teaching.

Introduction

Since its establishment in 1968, Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College (Hostos), has attended to the diverse needs of New York City's underserved population by offering full-time, part-time and evening college degree programs, as well as the

provision of non-degree or certificate programs. As stated in its original proposal by the Board of Higher Education, Hostos, "will fulfill the functions of a comprehensive community college, serve the needs of a poverty area, and provide extensive and unique opportunities in education for health careers," (April, 1968). Since its inception, Hostos has been innovative in providing a broad range of health and social service academic programs that meet the growing demand for skilled health care workers in New York City. Currently, Hostos provides a wide array of online and hybrid courses in various disciplines, such as math, business, health science, humanities and social science, to support student retention, academic persistence and degree completion.

Hostos continues to fulfill its legacy of providing education as a tool for social mobility to diverse student populations that have been historically marginalized from higher education. This has enabled Hostos students who report being in the bottom 20 percent household income upon degree completion to achieve incomes in the top 20 percent (New York Times, 2017). These students represent low-income communities, communities of color, immigrants and the justice involved. As a community anchor, Hostos provides more than just academic programs. The college offers cultural events and countless community collaborative programs. Hostos is part of the City University of New York (CUNY), which is the largest public and urban university system in the country. Moreover, within CUNY community colleges, Hostos reports having the highest "intergenerational social mobility rate" of students (New York Times, 2017). Therefore, as an academic institution educating underserved populations, Hostos is poised to promote education technology to address the digital gap that is pervasive in underserved communities.

Hostos Community College as a National Innovator

Among the ranks of community colleges, Hostos has become a national innovator using education technology to improve student learning. Such efforts have been acknowledged by the Center for Digital Education (CDE), which ranked Hostos as the top Digital Community College in 2016. In the most recent national survey conducted by the CDE, "Hostos placed second overall in the nation among mid-sized colleges," (Center for Digital Education, 2018). Notable to mention is Hostos' continuous top ten ranking eight times as a digital community college. Hostos continuously strives to use education technology to foster an engaging learning environment inside and outside the classroom that supports student retention, academic persistence and degree completion. Moreover, Hostos utilizes education technology to support faculty in adopting innovative teaching modalities that promote active learning and enhances pedagogy. Such strategies are crucial in establishing a strong academic foundation among community college students who mostly transfer to four-year colleges. Recent data shows community colleges having a pivotal role in shaping the academic and career trajectory of most students with a bachelor's degree. According to a report from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Research Center, approximately half of all baccalaureate degree recipients at a certain point were enrolled at a community college prior to transferring to a four-year college (NSC, 2017). Furthermore, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education estimates that forty percent of all enrollments in higher education in the United States are from community colleges (2011).

Community College Students

Community college students tend to be older than four-year college students, and often are enrolled part-time and employed full-time (Jaggars, 2014). The average age of a Hostos student is 25years (OIRSA, 2017). As of fall 2018, there were 7,237 students enrolled in the college. Although the majority (54.9%) of Hostos students are enrolled full-time, a substantial number (45.1%) are enrolled part-time (OIRSA, 2017). The Hostos Community College student demographic is mostly composed of Hispanics (59%), African Americans (22%) and females (66%) (OIRSA, 2017). The Hostos student demographic follows the national enrollment profile of community college students, where forty-four percent are Hispanic and thirty-five percent are Black undergraduate students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Hostos, as a community college in the South Bronx, is a gateway to postsecondary education for students of low-socioeconomic status who are often first-generation college attendees. National data reports that forty-four percent of low-income students (those with family incomes of less than $25,000 per year) enroll in a community college after high school, compared to fifteen percent of high-income students (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2011). Comparably, thirty-eight percent of students whose parents did not graduate from college report a community college as their first post-secondary enrollment institution, compared with twenty percent of students whose parents graduated from college (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2011).

Hostos' student population reflects the national student profile at community colleges, which experience high rates of poverty coupled with the need to take various remedial courses for several semesters before being able to take college courses.

According to a study conducted by the Community College Research Center, among 250,000 students at 57 community colleges, it was reported that fifty-nine percent of new students were referred to remedial math and thirty-three percent were referred to remedial reading (Bailey, Jeong & Cho, 2010). Completion of remedial courses is usually correlated with a student's ability to stay in college and earn a bachelor's degree. Remediation assists students who are unprepared for college academic work by providing basic skills/knowledge. At Hostos, 27.9% of freshmen students are in a remedial math course and 22.7% are in an English remedial course. As freshmen students progress in their academic trajectory at Hostos, they enroll in online courses.

Two studies analyzing the performance of community college students in online courses demonstrated the students' decrease in academic performance in fully online courses (CCRC, 2013; Xu & Jaggars, 2014). However, it is noted that such poor academic performance in online courses was mainly noted among lower performing students who also experienced poor academic performance in face-to-face courses. Xu and Jaggars noted that students with a GPA less than 3.02 are two percent more likely to drop out of an in person course than a student with a GPA greater than 3.02 (2014). By comparison, in online courses, students with poor academic performance are four percent more likely to drop out of the course (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). In contrast to national data that shows a decrease in the academic performance of community college students in online courses (CCRC, 2013; Xu & Jaggars, 2014), Hostos students tend to show similar academic performance in online and face-to-face courses. In a comparison of online courses with face-to-face courses of a health science course (nutrition) at Hostos, the grade distribution was similar between the online sections and face-to-face sections of the

nutrition course (OIRSA, 2018). This nutrition course is perceived by students in the college to be difficult, as it requires prior knowledge of biology and basic chemistry. Hostos uses education technology as a social equalizer that enables students to be computer and software literate. The Hostos Office of Education Technology (Ed Tech) provides all enrolled students free access to various software (e.g. e-portfolios, MATLAB, SPSS), as well as tablets and computers, to practice using of the software. The Ed Tech office provides awards to students who demonstrate knowledge of the software and its educational applicability. This allows students to become involved with the Hostos Ed Tech office and learn about education technology in an engaging manner. Additionally, this prompts students to become better prepared for the technology driven work force, particularly in the health sector, where technology is central to health care.

The Increased Demand for Online Learning at Community Colleges

Nationwide there has been an increase in the enrollment of online courses at public two-year institutions (Jaggars, 2014). Community colleges offer an open admissions policy, which attracts a diverse student population that is non-traditional in demographic make-up (Jaggars, 2014). Online courses offer community college students a flexible and convenient schedule that allows them to fulfill multiple responsibilities (i.e. work and family). In a survey conducted at Hostos Community College, approximately one-fourth of the student respondents reported taking online courses due to their flexibility and convenience, which allows them to fulfill their work or family commitments (Wolfe, DiSanto, Poma & Rodriguez, 2018). The literature notes that another factor influencing student enrollment in online courses is their perceived ease of learning the subject (Jaggars, 2014; XU & Jaggars, 2014). According to Jaggars, most

students prefer online courses in subject areas they identify as easy and prefer to take face-to-face courses in subjects they consider to be challenging, such as math and science (2014). A third factor influencing student enrollment in online courses is the student's regard for the subject. Jaggars noted that students were averse to taking online courses in subjects they held in high regard, such as courses in their major, interesting subjects or courses perceived as difficult to learn (2014). In contrast, the Health Education Unit at Hostos Community College offers the highest amount of online courses (asynchronous and hybrid) to students majoring in community health. Students in this unit select online courses in their major regardless of their perceived ease or difficulty, due to the flexibility that online courses (hybrid and asynchronous) provide. Jaggars notes that a consistent level of interaction technology that facilitates student-instructor interactions is needed (2014). Xu and Jaggars note that such technology is particularly important for community college students, who tend to perform poorly in online math courses (2014). At Hostos Community College, a lecture capture initiative is taking place with various course subjects, some of which are perceived to be difficult by students (e.g. health science, biology, business). The software Panopto is used to record lectures, in the form of videos, which allows students to review previous course materials to improve their understanding of course content.

Theoretical Frameworks to Create an Engaging Online Teaching Environment

1. Using Constructs from Pedagogy of the Oppressed to Teach Online at Hostos

Due to Hostos being a product of the American civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement, its foundation is composed of social activism, which

facilitates the utilization of a social justice lens to teach curricula at the college. Through this lens, students are prompted to become social change agents. By Hostos utilizing Paulos Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed to integrate education technology in courses, students lose the fear of technology and discover an appreciation for newly acquired skills. One of the focus areas of pedagogy of the oppressed is to identify systems of oppression that perpetuate the subjugation of the people (Freire, 1970/2018). Following Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, professors and students are prompted to see each other as co-facilitators of learning, where the instructor prompts students to see their personal plight as a source of knowledge, rather than a deficiency. This viewpoint enables students to increase their self-confidence and self-efficacy, prompting them to embrace academic challenges. By seeing instructors as a learning partner, a system of mentoring and support is created for students who often lack the knowledge of how to build social capital. It is through these achievements that students and instructor begin to make groundbreaking discoveries in and outside the classroom. Students gain an appreciation for learning and self-discovery and connect thoughts with concrete actions.

Although technology offers innumerable possibilities, these benefits are not equally distributed in society. This creates a digital gap that exacerbates the problems of oppression and exploitation, as information is only being created and accessed by a partial number of people in society who are usually in positions of power. Through the utilization of constructs from the pedagogy of the oppressed, education technology is integrated into courses, allowing students broad accessibility to computer literacy and preparing them for the workforce. However, what is most significant, is that underserved students who become computer literate have the ability co-create society's norms for

technology. Consequently, Hostos students who represent a historically marginalized and underserved population will embark in careers where they are underrepresented and create a paradigm shift that impels social change. The career fields of technology and health care are highly underrepresented by minorities. Hostos academic degree programs aim to increase the representation of highly skilled minorities in professional fields where they are underrepresented. One of the largest degree bearing programs at Hostos is the Allied Health Program, which provides associate degrees in nursing, dental hygiene and radiology technology.

2. Communal Constructivism for Online Teaching at Hostos

As Hostos continues to fulfill its mission of providing access to higher education to historically marginalized populations, it also aims to empower this population. As a faculty teaching online courses in public health, teaching students to access current and accurate health information is crucial. By utilizing communal constructivism as an approach, where learning is seen as a social and collaborative effort that is facilitated by the instructor, students are actively engaged in the learning process (Tangney, FitzGibbon, Savage, Mehan & Holmes, 2001). Communal constructivism as a learning theory asserts that students can construct their own knowledge (constructivism) as an outcome of interacting with their environment (social constructivism) and therefore become co-creators of knowledge for their learning community (Tangney et al., 2001). Leask and Younie note that the theory of social constructivism accounts for the different forms of community building, whether virtual or physical, and the various forms that knowledge are created, shared and recreated by both student and instructor (2001). I therefore utilized components of this theory to enlist the participation of students in my

online health courses to create and share knowledge in a virtual classroom that builds a virtual community of learners.

Continuous discoveries in the health field lead to the constant updating of health information. Learning in the information age requires interaction with computers, which allows students to interface with various sources of information. Students must develop the skill of discernment, where they can distinguish reliable health information and sources from unreliable ones. Students in my online health courses are required to search for current health information and document their search methodology. For example, they must annotate the search engines utilized and the websites visited. They must then provide a presentation of their findings to the virtual class. This process is iterative and enables students to build confidence in developing a sound methodology for inquiry. Using a communal constructivist approach requires courses to be dynamic and adaptive to the students' need. Since peer support and group learning are promoted in this approach, students are provided with continual learning support from the instructor and their peers. Students also see themselves as co-creators of knowledge rather than just consumers of information (Tangney et al., 2001). The students at Hostos represent marginalized groups that society has ignored and rendered as unimportant, but, through communal constructivism, they become important learners who create knowledge. Moreover, their work and contributions in the classroom are acknowledged.

As a faculty member teaching public health courses at Hostos, the utilization of Panopto has enabled students to become co-creators of knowledge. Although Panopto is mainly used as lecture capture software, I provide students in my asynchronous nutrition courses the opportunity to make presentations on topics that they want to further explore.

During this process, students are required to learn the usage of the Panopto software. This provides them with an additional skill that they can utilize beyond the course. Furthermore, peer learning takes place as each student creates and shares a video presentation virtually with the class. After the presentation, over a period of a week, students are required to engage in virtual class discussions that focus on the content of the presentation. In these virtual class discussions, students discuss and deconstruct concepts. My role in these virtual discussions is that of a facilitator of learning, where I provide feedback and guidance on the content and allow the students to make real world connections to the course content. This allows the students to gain a more in depth and broader understanding of the root causes of obesity in the United States. Moreover, students develop a robust understanding of the diseases that are connected to dietary behavior. Such information is often difficult to grasp in an online teaching environment where there is limited exposure to real world experiences. However, when a virtual space for student dialogue is opened, the learning possibilities are endless. Students engage in intrinsic learning, which allows the course content to resonate with their life experiences. Noteworthy to mention is that prompting adult learner's to utilize prior life experiences when learning new content is supported by the experiential learning theory (ELT), which asserts that holistic learning takes place when individuals interact with their environment (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Experiential learning theory enables students to develop confidence and autonomy and the ability to reflect and learn. By providing my students with a virtual and interactive space to dialogue and explore concepts that are abstract or new, students are able to actively engage in the learning process and see themselves as contributors to knowledge.

Diffusion of Innovation for Online Teaching at Hostos

History has taught us that the adoption of innovations is staggered among populations. The Diffusion of Innovation model is utilized to comprehend the necessary methodology to accomplish a broader dissemination and diffusion of innovations. Diffusion and dissemination are two distinct concepts. According to Rogers, diffusion is the process by which an innovation is conveyed through certain outlets over time among members of a social system (2003). In contrast, dissemination is a deliberate and systematic effort to enable the wide distribution and availability of an innovation (i.e. online courses) to an intended audience or members of a social system (Oldenburg & Glanz, 2008). In examining the diffusion and dissemination of online courses, it is important to understand the faculty and student perceptions. Studies analyzing faculty perceptions of online courses report that computer self-efficacy, which is the self-confidence that individuals have in using computers and the perceived ease of use of education technology, impact faculty involvement and satisfaction with teaching online (Wingo, Ivankova & Moss, 2017). By comparison, studies analyzing students' perceptions of online courses demonstrate that the reasons why students enroll in online courses are flexibility, convenience and perceived ease of learning the subject (Jaggars, 2014; Wolfe et.al, 2018). Noteworthy to mention is that the majority of student respondents in a survey at Hostos Community College reported online courses to be equally as challenging as face-to-face courses (Wolfe et. al, 2018). This finding challenges data from other studies that report students' perceptions of online courses as easier than face-to-face (Jaggars, 2014; Kauffman, 2015). However, it important to acknowledge that the Hostos student population is heavily composed of students who

initially enroll with remedial needs (freshmen math remedial course 52% and English remedial course 28.1%) and English language learners (16%) and this may influence their perception of online courses (OIRSA, 2017).

Allen and Seaman observe that, in the United States, there is an increased demand for faculty to teach online courses (2015). A key success of online courses is their ability to provide millions of students with access to higher education, which they might be otherwise denied because of time or geographic challenges (Allen & Seaman, 2015). However, it is noted that one of the persistent failures of online education has been its inability to win the full support of faculty (Allen & Seaman, 2015). Over the past decade, faculty have shown a paltry level of acceptance for online education as a valuable and legitimate mode of instruction (Allen & Seaman, 2015). According to Allen & Seaman, only 28% of chief academic officers reported that their faculty accepted the value and legitimacy of online education (2015). Based on the model of diffusion of innovation, the more presence online teaching has at an institution, the more likely faculty will accept it.

At Hostos, the Office of Educational Technology offers faculty the opportunity for professional development by participating in the online course development initiative. This initiative is held in high regard by the Hostos college administrators and viewed by the college committees granting faculty tenure and promotion as part of faculty improving their pedagogy and professional development. Studies have shown that more faculty are motivated to teach online when they see the achievement of teaching online recognized and rewarded by their academic institution (Bacow et al., 2012; Gautreau, 2011). Furthermore, student surveys at Hostos reinforce the importance that online

courses have in supporting the strategic plan of the college. The Hostos Community College Strategic Plan focuses on increasing student academic persistence and the reduced time to degree completion. Due to their flexible schedule and accessibility, online courses at Hostos have the potential of supporting students in completing their degree in a shorter time. Hostos data showing the three-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshman shows an increase in graduation rates from 12.6% in academic year 2013 - 2014 to 22.1% in academic year 2015 -2016 (OIRSA, 2018b). During this period there was an expansion of the online course development initiative which trains and supports faculty in the development of online courses. Although there is no evidence of a causal relationship between the increase of graduation rates and the expansion of online courses at Hostos, online courses have allowed students more options in completing their degrees. As such, online teaching can become an integral component of the college strategic plan. These factors may further promote online teaching among Hostos faculty and administrators as they realize the potential value of online teaching.

Academic leadership at Hostos has started to recognize the time consuming effort that it takes for faculty to teach an online course as oppose to a face-to-face course. This recognition has translated into the Office of Educational Technology offering continued technical support through workshops, one-on-one trainings and continuously enhancing the software used for teaching as a way to improve the online teaching experience among faculty. A recent satisfaction survey of the Hostos Ed Tech Office demonstrated that, among 22 rating faculty, there was a high level of satisfaction (97.29%) with the professional development workshops offered by Ed Tech, and, among 31 faculty ratings, there was also a high level (99.40%) of satisfaction with one-on-one support (Ed Tech

Annual Report, 2018). Due to the faculty-teaching load at Hostos being 24 credit hours per academic year, which translates to faculty teaching 4 classes each semester, online teaching has become a life line for most tenure track faculty who must meet the rigorous demands of teaching, producing scholarship, and providing service to the institution. Online courses offer faculty at community colleges the latitude to engage in scholarly activities while also fulfilling their teaching responsibilities. Whereas the majority of students express interest in online courses due to their flexible schedule and accessibility, faculty express interest in teaching online courses due to their flexible schedule, perceived usefulness (PU), meaning the level to which one believes a technology will enhance his or her job performance, and perceived ease of use (PEU), which is the amount of effort an individual deems he or she will need to spend to master that technology (Wingo, Ivankova & Moss, 2017). Allen and Seaman note that a growing number of faculty are realizing the benefits that online teaching offers, such as a flexible teaching schedule, as well as opportunities for personal and professional development (2015).

Challenges and strengths in Teaching Online

There is a substantial amount of research focusing on quality in college-level teaching. Such research asserts that students deem teachers to be effective when they are responsive, passionate, student-centered, professional, and content experts (Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, Collins, Filer, Wiedmaier, & Moore, 2007). Kester, Kirschner, & Corbalan assert that interaction is a key element in the learning environment (2006). Chen & Shaw also note that for students to have mastery over new and difficult course

content, the information must be clearly presented and instructor feedback should be timely (2006). Chickering and Gamson offer over fifty years of research on college pedagogy, and through their research, they recognized seven dimensions of practice that are considered fundamental elements of quality college instruction (1987). These seven dimensions entail faculty who promote: active learning, student-faculty interactions; collaborations among students; timely feedback to students; emphasizes time on task; clearly convey high expectations; and embrace diverse learning styles and talents (1987). These dimensions are influenced by the skills of the instructor as well as the modality through which the instruction is delivered (e.g. online or face-to-face).

Opponents of online teaching raise concerns about the quality of student and instructor interactions, course design and the ability of online courses to address the dimensions of instructional effectiveness offered by Chickering and Gamson. Omrod notes that students who are learning new and complex materials usually are not organized in their cognitive process and therefore are unable to prioritize and focus on crucial information in order to gain mastery (2004). Oh and Jonassen affirm that self-regulation of learning is difficult for most students and that students learning in online courses have challenges with understanding information and its application (2007). Providing information to students or ensuring that students have access to information resources is not sufficient for the learning process. These strategies do not correlate with the intricacies of learning that require full understanding of complex course content and its application. Currently, there is limited research discussing the capacities of online instruction in attending to the dimensions of effective college learning and the systems utilized to teach online.

Proponents for online teaching praise the limitless potential that online media offers in the learning process. It is noted that online media offers boundless possibilities in enhancing interaction and student engagement. When deliberately designed, threaded discussions, e-mail, short video clips and two-way audio offer innumerable opportunities to enrich the learning environment of students. At Hostos, faculty are partaking in an initiative to utilize Panopto, a lecture capture software that allows faculty to record their lectures as well as other teaching conten,t which students can access via the college learning management system (Blackboard). In addition to faculty creating content in Panopto, students are granted access by the course instructor to upload recordings of presentation projects, which are shared with the entire class via Blackboard. At Hostos, over the span of two consecutive semesters, 265 students enrolled in a course participating in the Panopto initiative were surveyed. Of these students, 82% reported that the Panopto videos helped improved their understanding of the course materials and 71% reported the top reason for using Panopto was for exam preparation (Ed Tech Annual Report, 2018). In this manner students, contribute to course content and are actively engaged in their learning as they exchange information with their peers and the instructor. Failing grade analysis data for fall of 2017 for courses using Panopto and non-Panopto sections demonstrated a lower failing percentage of students in two courses with Panopto. Failure percentage for a 200 level business course utilizing Panopto was 0%, whereas the non-Panopto section reported 5.3% (Ed Tech Annual Report, 2018). Failure percentage of an education course was 10% for the Panopto section, in comparison to 21.3% for the non-Panopto section (Ed Tech Annual Report, 2018). Noteworthy to mention is that the passing percentage for Panopto and non-Panopto sections of the 200 level business

course was similar. The passing percentage for the Panopto section of the 200 level business course was 91.7%, and 94.7% for the non-Panopto section (Ed Tech Annual Report, 2018). However, for the education course, the passing percentage for the Panopto section was 90.0%, and 78.7% for the non-Panopto section. These differences may partly be due to the aforementioned seven teaching dimensions that Chickering and Gamson offer for instructional effectiveness, where teaching is influenced by the skills of the instructor as well as the modality through which the instruction is delivered (e.g. online or face-to-face).

Hostos faculty feedback has been positive and demonstrates their perceived ease of use of the Panopto technology. One Hostos faculty responded by stating, "Panopto still remains relatively easy" (Ed Tech Annual Report, 2018). As part of expanding the diffusion of Panopto on campus, the Office of Educational Technology at Hostos has fully integrated Panopto into Blackboard, the learning management system of the college. This strategy allows any faculty interested in using Panopto easy access. It is fundamentally clear that until educators can provide a fully interactive online learning environment that attends to the various learning dimensions noted by Chickering and Gamson, online teaching will continually have to explore interactive modalities that intrinsically motivate students and provide opportunities for them to apply new information.

Supporting Education Technology and Online Teaching in a Community College

Hostos' Office of Educational Technology offers faculty and student support in the form of trainings to utilize educational technology software such as Blackboard and

Panopto, as well as tech support for faculty and students involved in asynchronous and hybrid courses. In 2015, the Office of Educational Technology developed an award winning online readiness course entitled "Are you Ready." This online course offers students the opportunity to assess their readiness to enroll in online courses and to learn the fundamental skills required to be an online learner. Enrollment in this online readiness course is voluntary, yet strongly recommended by faculty, particularly by faculty who teach asynchronous and hybrid courses.

Through a committee of experts on campus that is composed of faculty and staff who are innovators and experienced online course developers, the Office of Educational Technology provides faculty with trainings and mentoring in the development of asynchronous and hybrid courses. This ensures the integrity and uniformity of the design of online courses. The guidelines set for the design of online courses are based on national standards and faculty receive training and mentoring over the period of one full semester before becoming certified to teach an online course. Once the course is designed on Blackboard, a panel of faculty experts who have extensive experience teaching and designing online courses evaluate the proposed online course and provide constructive and meaningful feedback to the course designer. Such feedback adheres to the established principles of online course design set in the Quality Matters Rubric Standards and CSU Chico Rubrics for Online Instruction. Throughout the mentoring and training process of online course design, it is emphasized to faculty that online courses are expected to be equivalent to a regular face-to-face course and should cover all the learning goals and objectives that a regular course does in a semester based on the college curriculum. The Hostos online course development guidelines highlight that what

distinguishes an online course from a face-to-face course is the "mode of delivery, not the content of the class" (Ed Tech, 2015). Moreover, the Office of Educational Technology at Hostos holds an open door policy for faculty and students, which proves to be beneficial for online students and faculty teaching online courses. This open door policy provides faculty and students continued support throughout the teaching and learning process of an online course. It is noted that when institutions provide continued mentoring, training, support, and recognition for teaching online, faculty are more receptive of online teaching. By academic institutions understanding faculty and student perceptions of online education, informed decisions about faculty trainings, student support and educational technology selection are successfully made. Other important factors that institutions must consider to strengthen their online teaching programs include integrating online teaching as part of the college strategic plan and faculty involvement in the planning and implementation process of online teaching.

The mission of Hostos Community College is to educate and promote social mobility among diverse student populations that have been historically marginalized from higher education. The use of education technology is an example of the college fulfilling its mission of utilizing education as a vehicle for social mobility and addressing longstanding injustices by narrowing the digital divide that is pervasive in underserved populations in the South Bronx and New York City.

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