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Using "Hybrid" Effectively in Christian Higher Education

Daniel L. Brunner

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By Daniel L. Brunner

The convergence of online and traditional face-to-face education has been called "the single-greatest unrecognized trend in higher education today."[1] This oft-cited comment reflects not just the promise of the hybrid model, but also the fact that, in the battle over the effectiveness of face-to-face versus online learning, the hybrid paradigm has gone largely unnoticed. But this lack of attention is changing quickly.

During the 2003-04 school year I received a teaching load reduction in order to 1) research hybrid courses, and 2) experiment with the hybrid model by redesigning a church history class.[2] Using published research and personal interviews with hybrid practitioners, I explored the hybrid model. Then in the summer of 2004, I taught a course I had revamped from one I taught previously in a face-to-face classroom setting. Through research and trial and error, I came to the conclusion that the hybrid model offers enticing possibilities for improving learning in Christian higher education and for bridging the perceived gap between traditional, face-to-face education and online learning.

The purpose of this article, then, is to explore the potential of the hybrid model for enhancing the quality of the teaching-learning enterprise. Specifically, first we will put forward *practical* essentials to be aware of when entering the gauntlet of hybridization, and then suggest some implications for Christian higher education. My hope is to encourage further conversation around pedagogy and to provide concrete ways to move in the direction of integrating online and face-to-face learning.

To begin, a definition of hybrid is useful. According to the Learning Technology Center (LTC) at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, hybrid courses are

As the debate over technology and distance education swirls, hybrid education—linking face-to-face with online—is garnering increased attention. In this article, **Daniel L. Brunner** investigates through research and his own experimentation the "how" of hybrid. He names six "good practices" that entail the facilitation of learning, re-imagining the courses themselves, integration of face-to-face with online, socialization, course design, and training and support. To conclude, he sketches out three possible implications for Christian higher education. Mr. Brunner is Associate Professor of Church History and Spiritual Formation at George Fox Evangelical Seminary.

116 those which seek to combine face-to-face classroom instruction with computer-based learning, resulting in more online learning and less seat time than a traditional course.[3] While the use of the Web to enhance the traditional classroom is increasing across the country and universities are investing significant resources to introduce the Web into traditional teaching,[4] technically, at least for the sake of this discussion, a hybrid course is distinguished from a Web-enhanced course by the fact that seat time has been reduced in a hybrid course in order to move more learning into the online environment. However, hybrid courses vary significantly in how the ratio of face-to-face to online time is distributed.[5]

"Hybrid" is just one of a number of terms used for the convergence of face-to-face and online learning. At the University of Central Florida (UCF) they are called "mixed mode" courses.[6] In the corporate world the most common language used for hybrid is "blended learning." Blended learning, says Bob Mosher, is about using "multiple learning modalities," which include, but are not limited to, the Web.[7] The "blended learning" term is also being used more frequently within academic circles.[8] Because of the inconsistency in how "blended learning" is employed, though, and because our goal is not to describe learning in general but to focus on individual courses, this article will use the term "hybrid" and will apply it more narrowly to mean a course in which face-to-face and online learning are integrated

[1]Graham B. Spanier, president of Pennsylvania State University, in a 2000 address, quoted in Jeffrey R. Young, "'Hybrid' Teaching Seeks to End the Divide Between Traditional and Online Instruction," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 48.28 (March 22, 2002), under "Faculty Preferences," <chronicle.com/free/v48/i28/28a03301.htm>.

[2]I wish to express my thanks to George Fox University not only for giving me the reduction in my teaching load but also for providing a travel grant to underwrite a visit to the Learning Technology Center at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee.

[3]Learning Technology Center, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, "Hybrid Course Website," <www.uwm.edu/Dept/LTC/hybrid/> (accessed August 5, 2004); Carla Garnham and Robert Kaleta, "Introduction to Hybrid Courses," *Teaching with Technology Today* 8.6 (March 20, 2002), under "What is a hybrid course?" <www.uwsa.edu/ttt/articles/garnham.htm>. For the information and one-on-one time given me during a research visit on October 6-8, 2003, I wish to express my thanks to Alan Aycock, Jay Caulfield, Carla Garnham, and Robert Kaleta, the staff of the Learning Technology Center.

[4]Robin C. Wingard, "Classroom Teaching Changes in Web-Enhanced Courses: A Multi-Institutional Study," *Educause Quarterly* 27.1 (2004): 26, <www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eqm0414.pdf>.

[5]Alan Aycock, Carla Garnham, and Robert Kaleta, "Lessons Learned from the Hybrid Course Project," *Teaching with Technology Today* 8.6 (March 20, 2002), under "Lesson #1," <www.uwsa.edu/ttt/articles/garnham2.htm>.

[6]Young, "'Hybrid' Teaching Seeks to End the Divide," under "Faculty Preferences."

[7]Bob Mosher, "Blended Learning: What Does It Really Take to Make It Work?" *elementk*, "Training Advice" (September 2001), <www.elementk.com/training_advice/htm/09-01-blended_learning.asp>.

[8]At least thirteen projects funded by the Pew Grant Program in Course Redesign have in some way made use of blended learning to lower costs and increase learning. See Richard Voos, "Blended Learning—What Is It and Where Might It Take Us?" *Sloan-C View: Perspectives in Quality Online Education* 2.1 (February 2003), <www.sloan-c.org/publications/view/v2n1/blended1.htm>.

in such a way that the seat time of the course is reduced.

Essentials for Hybridization

A perusal of published articles reveals that proponents assert numerous advantages to the hybrid model, especially when compared to the face-to-face and online models separately. Those strengths include the following: an increase in student performance and retention; more time flexibility for students; the availability of multiple modes for learning; a deeper sense of community; greater interaction among students and teachers; the opportunity to make a gradual transition to the online environment; and the ability to communicate higher expectations.[9]

But the major purpose of this article is to explore the "how" of hybrid: the alterations, the rethinking, the costs, and other aspects that make effective hybrid courses possible. It should surprise no one that a move to hybrid courses—and eventually more broadly to hybrid learning—involves a paradigm shift at some of the most integral levels of education. While my own experience with redesigning a traditional course into a hybrid is limited and anecdotal at best, when it is combined with published "good practices" and interviews of seasoned practitioners, one can garner a collection of essentials for effective implementation of the hybrid model.

The Teacher Must Facilitate Learning

One of the most noteworthy consequences of the explosion in online learning is that it compels teachers and institutions to examine pedagogy and student learning. To wit, in order to teach a hybrid course effectively, it is essential that the teacher see his or her role primarily as a facilitator of learning. To define the teacher's primary role in such a way is now almost ubiquitous, but one wonders how broadly it has been adopted. Chris Dede points out that there will always be "pioneers" who thrive on innovation in pedagogy and see growth in teaching as a vital part of their profession. But, in order for broad-based shifts to take place, a larger group of teachers—propped up by an institution's management and structure—must become "settlers" and revise their pedagogy and methodology. A vital first step in this overall transformation of pedagogy is to "unlearn" previous beliefs, assumptions, and values connected to the old model.[10] One thing that must be unlearned

[9]Daniel L. Brunner, "The Potential of the Hybrid Course Vis-a-Vis Online and Traditional Courses," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9.4 (2006): 229-35; Steve Delamarter and Daniel L. Brunner, "Theological Education and Hybrid Models of Distance Learning," *Theological Education* 40.2 (2005): 145-61.

[10]Chris Dede, "The Role of Emerging Technologies for Knowledge Mobilization, Dissemination, and Use in Education," Commissioned by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education" (January 2000); see especially "C. Beyond Learning: A New Model to Unlearning Standard Operating Procedures," <www.virtual.gmu.edu/EDIT895/knowlmob.html>.

is the conviction that a professor is predominately a dispenser of knowledge. Rather, effective hybrid teachers "imagine interactivity rather than delivery" and are prepared for a certain "loss of power" as they facilitate learning environments.[11] They recognize their central role, through course design and pedagogy, for creating and sustaining classroom community.[12] This conversion of mindset from dispenser of knowledge to facilitator of learning is aided by the ability to experiment on a smaller scale with pedagogical innovations through the hybrid model.

It must be acknowledged—and this is a critical issue for administrators who might want to explore hybrid learning—that the transition to being a facilitator of learning involves sacrifice. Katrina Meyer's description of the successful online instructor applies to hybrid teachers as well: they are willing to experiment and tolerate frustration; they are internally motivated and resistant to non-rewards or lack of support from the system; they recognize the extra work load involved but take satisfaction from seeing students learn in the new milieu.[13] Almost universally, teachers report that hybrid teaching, in both the preparation and delivery of courses, takes more time than face-to-face teaching, although time demands are spread more evenly. Those who do make this investment tend to think that it is worthwhile because it creates a more effective learning environment.[14]

Courses Must be Re-imagined from the Ground Up

In spite of the fact that the hybrid model allows many instructors familiar with face-to-face learning to explore the online environment gradually, the reality is that ultimately, hybrid courses need to be redesigned from the ground up. With a hybrid course, something new is being created; it is important that a teacher not think in terms simply of adding online to a traditional course.[15] Too often face-to-face instructors who want to explore online fall prey to "the course and a half syndrome."[16] In other words, teachers who hear of certain advantages to online learning can be tempted just to add online practices to their existing face-to-face course without carefully considering the impact on the learner. Those instructors are hesitant to sacrifice their painstakingly prepared content—often perfected over

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[11]Peter Sands, "Inside Outside, Upside Downside: Strategies for Connecting Online and Face-to-Face Instruction for Hybrid Courses," *Teaching with Technology Today* 8.6 (March 20, 2002), www.uwsa.edu/ttt/articles/sands2.htm. See also Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 152f.

[12]Alfred P. Rovai, "A Preliminary Look at the Structural Differences of Higher Education Classroom Communities in Traditional and ALN Courses," *The Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 6.1 (July 2002): 52.

[13]Katrina A. Meyer, *Quality in Distance Education: Focus on On-Line Learning*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report: Vol. 29.4 (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass): 74.

[14]Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #2," "Lesson #4," and "Lesson #10"; Sands, "Inside Outside, Upside Downside," under "3. Prepare yourself for loss of power..."

[15]Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #4."

[16]Bob Kaleta, interview by author, 6 October 2003, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, author notes.

years in the classroom—for some new-fangled, unproven online "interaction" in which students might do nothing more than pool their ignorance.

The transition from sage on the stage to facilitator of learning is painful in practice. That is why a change in mindset is the first prerequisite. However, when one is prepared to make the leap to hybrid and to redesign a course, it is critical first to examine course objectives or goals and then to resolve which are best met through a face-to-face experience and which through a virtual environment. For instance, certain tasks, such as large group discussions or simulation exercises, lend themselves to a face-to-face setting, while others, like small group asynchronous discussions or practicing critical review skills, can best be accomplished online.[17] In re-imagining a course, one seeks to assign particular learning activities to the venue in which they can best be accomplished. The question becomes one of maximizing learning, based on the curriculum and the characteristics of the learner.[18]

Even though the pedagogical resources for developing a hybrid course are plentiful and come from a diversity of perspectives, one caveat is in order: learning is not just about using creative tools or technologies. Technology must be about effectively meeting outcomes; students themselves must see the relevance of the outcome or goal before they will learn from any modality.[19] Moving into a hybrid world pushes the issue of pedagogy and learning.

Online and Face-to-face Must be Intentionally Integrated

Hybrid course specialists emphasize that, when redesigning a course to incorporate online technologies, it is "impossible to stress integrating face-to-face and online learning too much."[20] One author describes the weaknesses of "siloed learning," in which various components of learning function independently of each other, in almost parallel dimensions.[21] For our discussion, the most common mistake of hybrid teaching is to add online experiences into the course—even reducing seat time—but to neglect to integrate that work into the classroom. In this scenario, an instructor essentially builds two courses. Experienced hybrid teachers have ascertained that they must dedicate a greater portion of face-to-face time to processing the online work students have done outside of class. The lack of integration is one of the chief complaints that students have about hybrid courses.[22]

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[17]Sands, "Inside Outside, Upside Downside," under "1. Start small and work backward…"; David G. Brown, "Hybrid Courses are Best," *Syllabus: New Dimensions in Education Technology* (August 2001), under "Comparative Advantage: FACE-TO-FACE vs. Virtual," <www.wfu.edu/%7Ebrown/Syllabus%20Articles/SylHybrid%20Courses.htm>.
[18]Meyer, *Quality in Distance Education*, 30f; see also M. G. Moore, "Editorial: Three Types of Interaction," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 3.2 (1989): 5.
[19]Mosher, "Blended Learning."
[20]Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #4."
[21]Mosher, "Blended Learning."
[22]Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #4"; Sands, "Inside

However, when students come to expect that the work they do in the online setting will be integrated intentionally into the next face-to-face class—what Aycock calls "closing the loop"—they take their responsibilities more seriously and are reinforced in some of the practices of good class "citizenship."[23] When integration is effectively utilized and students move seamlessly in and out of learning modalities, the course takes on an enhanced sense of cohesion and continuity.[24]

Socialization Must be Prioritized

Since building a sense of community enhances learning no matter what the environment,[25] it is worthwhile to ask what hybrid courses offer to that process of community building. The advantage of the hybrid course is that community building can be jump-started through an intentional stress on socialization in an opening face-to-face class or orientation. Group identity and cohesion, as well as future online interactions, can be improved when students first get acquainted face-to-face.[26] Another benefit of hybrid to socialization comes when wrapping up a class. Kaleta recommends that a final face-to-face session helps bring a sense of "closure" to the course, by summarizing what happened since the first session and then getting feedback from students.[27]

My experience reinforces this advice. While I hesitated giving up a few hours of my well-prepared content for the sake of face-to-face student interaction on the first day of class, I saw the benefits both in online asynchronous discussions that followed and in later face-to-face sessions. In addition, our final face-to-face session clearly brought a sense of emotional closure to the course; I could sense it in the language of students during the final hour of course evaluation. In my experience, "ramp down" assignments after the final face-to-face session do not work well when they require student-to-student interaction; the best "ramp down" tasks are those of a personal, reflective nature that would only be engaged by the instructor.

Course Design Must Incorporate Clarity and Consistency

The counsel of hybrid experts and my own trial and error highlight the impor-

Outside, Upside Downside," under "5. Plan for effective uses..."

[23]Alan Aycock, interview by author, 7 October 2003, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, author notes.

[24]See Wingard, "Classroom Teaching Changes," 32.

[25]Alfred P. Rovai, "Sense of Community, Perceived Cognitive Learning and Persistence in Asynchronous Learning Networks," *The Internet and Higher Education* 5.4 (2002): 330; Rovai, "Preliminary Look at Structural Differences," 43.

[26]Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #8"; Rovai, "Preliminary Look at Structural Differences," 53.

[27]Kaleta, interview by author, 6 October 2003.

[28]Karen Swan, "Building Learning Communities in Online Courses: The Importance of Interaction," *Education, Communication and Information* 2.1 (May 1, 2002): 11.

tance of clarity and consistency in hybrid course design. Karen Swan, in describing the three factors that contribute to the success of online learning, names first "a clear and consistent course structure."[28] What holds true of online courses in general also proves necessary for hybrid. For example, one of the criticisms of my hybrid course was that I varied the routine for online asynchronous discussions during the weeks between face-to-face class sessions. On one occasion, responses were due by noon on a given day; on another, they were to be completed by midnight. All that students wanted was consistency—and they preferred midnight.

The staff at the Learning Technology Center (LTC) provided numerous helpful suggestions in this arena.[29] Students appreciate multiple ways of following assignments online. Some students prefer an assignment page that lists assignments due week-by-week, while others like a calendar. Assorted ways of helping students pace themselves through the routine of the online component of the course is valuable. Redesigning a course means providing much greater detail in instructions, breaking down every assignment into accomplishable components, and then assigning each piece a part of the grade. Online discussions are given greater gravity when a significant part of the course grade is connected to their successful completion. When there are lengthier periods of time between face-to-face sessions, students need "mileposts" to keep them on the journey, and these mileposts should be graded. Students not only need to be logging on regularly, as often as four to five times per week, but they also need to be turning in work regularly, albeit as basic as a progress report or journal. Although many of these suggestions are commonly known to online instructors, they could be neglected by fledgling hybrid teachers.

Both Students and Instructors Must be Provided Training and Support

Since students do not always grasp the hybrid concept intuitively, a portion of the first face-to-face session should be devoted to an orientation not only into technology but also into the hybrid model itself.[30] Students sometimes mistakenly presume the hybrid model means less work; they need an explanation of and rationale for its pedagogy. Most students, especially those educated solely in a classroom-centered, lecture-driven model, need an introduction into active learning. Hybrid will seem like more effort, since most students do not regard listening to lectures as work. Students need to be convinced that the instructor believes that active learning pays off, even to the extent of losing some "content." In addition, students need initial training in both technology and time management. The face-to-face environment is the safest for addressing the qualms many students, especially adults, can have towards computer-mediated learning. It is also helpful during that first session to familiarize learners with the support systems available to

[29]Kaleta, interview by author, 6 October 2003; Carla Garnham, interview by author, 6 October 2003, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, author notes; Aycock, interview by author, 7 October 2003.
[30]Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #6" and "Lesson #8."

them institutionally. As with online learning, time management is a vital issue in hybrid courses and should be spoken of early on and throughout the course. Once socialization, the pedagogy of hybrid, technology, and time management have been addressed in the first face-to-face session, students will be less likely to find either hybrid pedagogy or the computer obstacles to learning.

From a faculty perspective, redesigning a traditional course into a hybrid takes more time than developing the face-to-face course in the first place; it even takes more time than creating a comparable online course.[31] To bring hybrid courses successfully into institutions requires the support and backing of administration.[32] Administrators can consider release time, summer contracts, mini-grants, and so forth as means to motivate the transition process to hybrid. The LTC has not always found it constructive if instructors are "forced" to redesign courses; however, when "motivations" are provided to volunteer faculty members, almost all of them speak positively of hybrid teaching. One means used by the LTC to train teachers is to take them through a hybrid course that allows them to learn experientially how to redesign current courses into hybrid courses. Institutions need to provide venues in which faculty can learn collegially from each other and where instructional technologists and faculty development specialists are available for consultation. These consultants, though, must understand the realities of teaching; as one person put it, teachers facing the prospect of redesigning courses need someone who "speaks prof and not tech."

Providing training and support for both students and faculty is essential for the successful implementation of hybrid courses. For some, these administrative hurdles and their financial ramifications may seem overwhelming. But the experience of those who teach hybrid courses offers evidence that the risk is worthwhile. At both University of Central Florida and University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, faculty satisfaction for hybrid courses is significantly higher than for comparable face-to-face or online sections of the same course, even though it inevitably means more work. When teachers experience hybrid pedagogy it often affects the way they teach other, even face-to-face, courses.[33]

It has been our goal in this section to sketch out what practitioners say are some of the essentials for creating successful hybrid courses. Should it surprise any of us in the fraternity of Christian higher education that ultimately such a transition involves substantial, even sacrificial, decisions?

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[31]Garnham and Kaleta, "Introduction to Hybrid Courses," under "What did the instructors say?"; Patsy Moskal, "Findings: UCF Online Faculty: Segment 1," Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness Website, University of Central Florida, 2001, video presentation, <pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~rite/> (accessed August 23, 2004).

[32]On what follows, see Kaleta, interview by author, 6 October 2003; Carla Garnham, interview by author, 7 October 2003, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, author notes; Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #4" and "Lesson #9."

[33]Moskal, "Findings: UCF Online Faculty: Segment 1," video presentation; Aycock, Garnham, and Kaleta, "Lessons Learned," under "Lesson #10" and "Conclusion."

Implications of Hybrid for Christian Higher Education   *123*

If hybrid pundits are correct—and the evidence at least compels consideration—then the convergence of online and face-to-face learning can create a unique pedagogical experience that will impact student learning in positive ways. It is hoped that this article can serve Christian higher education by encouraging further conversation around pedagogy, course design, and good teaching. The issues at stake, though, are more than casual "conversation points." A shift to hybrid courses, and ultimately to hybrid learning, is paradigmatic and calls us to reconsider certain long-held values and practices.

It Challenges Us to Move Beyond Either-Or Thinking

The current battle lines, if we can call them that, seem to have been established in an "either-or" fashion—either traditional face-to-face, classroom learning or learning in an online, Web-based environment. In seminary education, with which I am most familiar, even existing Association of Theological Schools standards and procedures seem (unintentionally?) to undergird this either-or mentality.[34] For example, the procedures related to the accreditation of distance education programs do not even apply to hybrid courses. A hybrid course falls under the category of a modified face-to-face course and therefore drops outside the guidelines for distance education.[35] However, as we have seen, there is no universal structure for a hybrid course. Some teachers may only move a small fraction of a syllabus into the online milieu, while others may eliminate as much as two-thirds or three-fourths of a traditional course's "seat time." In either case, the course is classified as modified face-to-face.

Categories could be created for the hybrid course in accrediting standards and procedures. Admittedly, defining a hybrid course could prove problematic, especially given the disparity in just how much seat time is reduced in various hybrid courses. Nonetheless, by assigning a category to hybrid, accrediting bodies can begin to break down "either-or" attitudes and to move beyond asking "Web-or-no-Web" to seeking "an understanding of how the Web may best be used in a class."[36]

It Provides Ways to Explore New Pedagogical Possibilities

Online education has brought to the fore the question of pedagogy. It bears repeating: the use of technology in any form does not guarantee increased student

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[34]Association of Theological Schools, "Procedures Related to Membership and Accreditation. V. Procedures for Approval of Programs Involving Multiple Locations (Extension Sites) and Distance Education," <www.ats.edu/download/acc/proced.pdf>.
[35]Delamarter and Brunner, "Theological Education and Hybrid Models of Distance Learning," 155-59.
[36]Meyer, *Quality in Distance Education*, 18.

learning. The issue is not whether or not technology is used, but how it is used. Therefore, making the transition from a face-to-face course to a hybrid course does not *de facto* mean that the class will be improved, either for the students or for the teacher. Good teaching is still good teaching. However, research gives evidence that, all other things being equal, creating a hybrid course forces a re-examination of pedagogy and provides the potential for increased student learning and satisfaction. Personally, now that I have experimented with hybrid, I am motivated to learn more about pedagogy and to apply it to other courses.

The flexibility of the hybrid course is crucial here. For some teachers, perhaps in traditional lecture courses, almost all online learning seems threatening. They do not feel "tooled up" for the online environment and they know enough to know that their lack of experience, expertise, and even desire in that setting will impact negatively the learning of their students. But for these teachers perhaps a "7% Solution"[37] can give them an encouraging taste of non-traditional learning, even if they never enter the world of online. The question is not the percentage of online versus face-to-face, or even whether the face-to-face class is supplemented with online or with some other form of creative learning tool; the issue is pedagogy and what pedagogical tool best accomplishes student learning and outcomes.

At this point, the conversation has moved beyond hybrid simply as a mix of face-to-face and online. In other words, even though we have demarcated hybrid as the integration of face-to-face and online learning, one could also speak of hybrid as the combination of any number of learning modalities. For example, if the world of corporate training can in any way be an exemplar for Christian higher education, then the use of a broad-based blended model holds out significant possibilities for acquiring such things as ministry skills. If learning something like Microsoft Excel is significantly enhanced by blending online content and simulations, text materials, help from mentors, and face-to-face instruction,[38] what does that say about learning ministry skills like pastoral counseling, preaching, teaching, running meetings, and so forth? The hybrid model challenges us as instructors not simply to include mentoring, role playing, and/or practical experience into our "ministry" courses, but to ask the question of how these elements might best be integrated pedagogically with other aspects of teaching, including face-to-face and online.

Other components of a broad education can benefit from a hybrid or blended paradigm. Creating online communities, for instance, can enrich the overall experience of a "service learning" course, as students engaged in the same (or in differ-

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[37]Alan Aycock (interview by author, 6 October 2003, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, author notes) advises that, in the beginning of transitioning courses into hybrids, teachers adopt a "7% Solution," whereby they take a small chunk of their syllabus and move it into an online learning opportunity, reducing seat time accordingly.

[38]Kim Kiser, "Is Blended Best? Thompson Learning Studies the Question," *LTI Magazine* (June 1, 2002), <www.ltimagazine.com/ltimagazine/content/printContentPopup.jsp?id =21259>.

ent projects) interact with each other. Some argue that spiritual formation can be given a boost in the hybrid environment; technology enhances opportunities for learners "to become more receptively and creatively contemplative,"[39] much like journaling, only that through the online milieu other students and the teacher can respond to one's spiritual reflections. If one of the strengths of the online environment is reflectiveness and transparency, especially for those inclined to introversion, the implications for extending spiritual formation are apparent.

It Offers a Model for Rethinking the Whole Learning Enterprise

In this article, the focus has been on the hybrid course itself. But, given what we know about the hybrid model, it raises the question of whether one can take those insights and apply them, in a sort of macro-perspective, to the learning enterprise as a whole. Elsewhere, a colleague and I have attempted to argue for that very thing—that the principles involved in effective hybrid courses can indeed be the building blocks for creating successful hybrid programs.[40] Just some of the possible consequences for Christian learning as a whole include the following: improved overall teaching effectiveness because of faculty interactions around pedagogy; deeper connections and community among students across the "campus"; greater access to education (with potentially less debt accumulation); and a more intentional integration and contextualization across the curriculum.[41]

The cost of such a transition, however, should not be underestimated. It requires not insignificant sacrifice on the part of individual faculty. Instructors across disciplines are experiencing more and more "pressure" pedagogically; teaching in the same way we were taught often feels inadequate. Meyer asserts: "Faculty will increasingly be called upon to be content experts and instructional designers, and adept at understanding pedagogy, the new technology, and learning in an online environment."[42] Such sentiments strike fear in the heart of many a teacher. At the same time, any transition to a hybrid model demands a considerable and risky investment on the part of an institution. On the one hand, to "require" departments and faculty to redesign courses and curricula into a hybrid format could breed frustration and rebellion; on the other hand, to "motivate" the principle players adequately for the time and effort needed could seem financially prohibitive and administratively negligent.

But will any of us in Christian higher education really have a choice? The

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[39]Alan Altany, "The Art of Learning with Technology: Spiritual, Mystical and Paradoxical Memories of the Future," Paper presented at Teaching in the Community College Online Conference (April 12-14, 2000), under "The Learner as CyberContemplative," <leahi.kcc.hawaii.edu/org/tcon2k/paper/paper_altanya.html> (accessed August 2, 2004).
[40]Delamarter and Brunner, "Theological Education and Hybrid Models of Distance Learning," 145-61.
[41]Ibid., 153-55.
[42]Meyer, *Quality in Distance Education*, 55.

126   whole idea of hybrid is gaining acceptance at least in part because the clear lines distinguishing traditional from non-traditional and online from face-to-face are fading. From a bird's eye view we are beginning to see the "hybridization of education where the distinction between traditional and non-traditional students is becoming more blurred."[43]

To summarize, the purpose of this article has been to promote discussion about the possibilities that hybrid courses offer to Christian higher education. In general, we have adopted a narrower definition of the hybrid course, one in which seat time is reduced in order to move more learning into an online setting. We have enumerated a few "good practices" for transitioning to hybrid courses: teachers must take on the mindset of facilitator rather than dispenser of knowledge; courses must be redesigned from the ground up; online and face-to-face components must be intentionally integrated; socialization and community building must be prioritized; course design must incorporate clarity and consistency; and both students and faculty must be provided training and support. Lastly, we have sketched out a few implications for Christian higher education, points which will hopefully provide grist for further research and conversation: How can accreditation standards and procedures around the hybrid course help move schools beyond "either-or" thinking? How might the hybrid model help keep attention focused on pedagogy and improving student learning? How does a hybrid model provide a paradigm for thinking about the delivery of Christian education as a whole?

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[43]Gregory L. Waddoups and Scott L. Howell, "Bringing Online Learning to Campus: The Hybridization of Teaching and Learning at Brigham Young University," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 2.2 (January 2002), under "Conclusion," <www.irrodl.org/content/v2.2/waddoups.html> (accessed October 4, 2003).