

The First-Year Seminar Course and Backwards Design Model

Adam Wasilko

Ashley Zarecky

Bill Shepardson

Doug Strahler

Huixiang Yuan

Michaela Noakes

Tammy Wiens

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Backwards Design Model

Our group was focused on designing an online course for college-aged students. Most of the members of our group have attended universities, or taught at universities, that offered some type of “Introduction to University Success” course for first-year students. We agreed that this type of a course would be well suited to an online format. We found a course syllabus for the Duquesne version of the University 101 course as well as a number of other sample syllabi from other universities. Since there were many common learning goals across all of these introductory courses, we felt that a Backwards Design model was especially well suited to our purpose in designing an online version of the course.

Backwards Design begins by asking, “What should students understand, know, and be able to do?” at the end of the course. By assessing the various syllabi, we had a very clear guideline for the desired results. We wanted students to have a successful transition from high school to college and we wanted to increase the likelihood of their remaining in school. Backwards design then asks us to make decisions about evidence of learning and assessment of learning.


Since we are inventing a new way of introducing students to this material, it is important to carefully think through what tasks will indicate understanding and what evidence of their knowledge and skill will provide strong indication of their future success.

Finally, Stage 3 becomes the heart of our work as a group. Here we decided what learning experiences were best suited to the desired outcomes, and in the case of bringing this course online, we also needed to decide what technologies would enhance the learning outcomes. While we did outline a course schedule for the entire semester we chose to give an in-depth lesson plan for a single week of the course. In week 2, the obvious technology to introduce to students is Blackboard because all the other technologies we will be using are embedded in Blackboard.

Specific Characteristics

When freshman students first arrive at a University to start a new stage in their academic careers, and lives, they face a myriad of changes to which they must adjust to very rapidly. There are two different sets of adjustments that these new students make very early on. The first set involves acclimating themselves with a new school, its campus life, infrastructure, and support systems already in place. The second set of adjustments still beg for a transition process to a new school, but call on the students to make a personal and emotional adjustment to a new living situation. This transition is one in which the familiar figures of the last eighteen years are no longer present and an entirely new group of friends, professors, and support staff will make up the daily environment of the student. The smooth transition of both areas is vital for academic success; this class will serve to ease both of those adjustments.

This group of students, namely college freshman, are being targeted due to the period of late adolescence and transition into early adulthood, which is being recognized as a distinct demographic in terms of emerging adulthood,



that they are going through (Arnett, 2000). These characteristics of the target group, freshman students, make them ideal candidates for this course.

This course will serve to use instructional technology to better acclimate themselves to the systems and services available at Duquesne University, while helping them transition to this new stage in their life with the interactions they will have with other students in the class. Personal relationships with friends and family are very important to the adjustment of a college freshman, but a sense of belonging and connection to a larger community is just as important (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Given the transition state freshmen are going through, the integration of themselves into the larger University community could be very daunting and stressful.

This class will not only ease the transition of the students to technological components such as Blackboard, Starfish, and the Wimba classroom. It will also help the student connect to fellow classmates in the same situation and feel a sense of belonging at the University they have chosen to attend for four to six years.

Stage One: Identify Desired Results

CONTENT STANDARDS

http://www.supercardng.com/bb_brochure/Bb_Learning_System_Brochure.pdf

Course Management - The Blackboard Learning System takes the stress out of managing course administration, whether features that can be used by individual instructors, administrators, or via integrated processes with other systems in the institution's IT infrastructure.

Instructional Tools - The Blackboard Learning System offers a wealth of features to facilitate the creation of professional, quality content, along with supplemental tools that further enhance overall course curriculum.

Collaboration and Communication - The Blackboard Learning System is a comprehensive environment for online collaboration

Assessment and Evaluation - The Blackboard Learning System offers dynamic, rules-based assessment authoring with fewer clicks and increased functionality.

ESTABLISHED GOALS

Students will:

- Demonstrate overall comprehension of Blackboard fundamentals
- Deliver a message through the digital drop box to verify understanding of the task
- Interact with the professor by means of email and the digital drop box
- Effectively participate in an online discussion
- Acquire skills to partake in the online learning environment Wimba

**Students will understand that:**

Achieving success within the navigation of Blackboard can be beneficial in their transition to college in addition to the completion of this course. In this particular session, students will apprehend basic Blackboard navigation - i.e. the digital drop box, email through Blackboard, online discussion, and Wimba.

Essential Questions

- How is Blackboard beneficial to a first year higher education student?
- What are the fundamentals of Blackboard?
- How do students navigate and effectively learn through an online learning environment?
- Which aspects of an online environment will result in meaningful learning?

Students will know:

- Key facets of the Blackboard learning environment
- How to use the digital drop box, email, and engage in an online discussion
- The fundamentals of the Wimba classroom

Students will be able to:

- Recognize and implement the basic elements of the Blackboard learning environment
- Use the digital drop box, email, and online discussion board
- Succeed in the online learning environment that is Wimba

See [syllabus](#) for the full set of instructional goals

Stage Two: Evidence and Assessment

At this stage in the design process our group worked to clarify results for week two and determine what would constitute sufficient evidence of the students' proficiency. By thinking through the evidence and assessments upfront, we hope to ensure greater alignment of our goals with student outcomes. With regards to Bloom's taxonomy, our expectations for learning are realistically set at Stage 3: Application. It is early in the semester and we're simply orienting students to the technology. We want to know they've understood the lesson and can apply it to simple navigation of the Blackboard site and Wimba classroom.

EVIDENCE**Performance Tasks**

The instructor will know the student has mastered the skills for the first week when he or she successfully posts a personal profile in Blackboard and also is able to leave a message for the instructor in the drop box.



Other Evidence

Bloom's taxonomy, our expectations for learning are realistically set at Stage 3: Application. It is early in the semester and we're simply orienting students to the technology. We want to know they've understood the lesson and can apply it to simple navigation of the Blackboard site and Wimba classroom.

Formative Assessment

During class time in the first week of the course students will demonstrate use of Wimba tools such as putting up a green check or a red "x," raising a hand, and using the talk button. Since this is the first time the course has been taught online, the instructor will need to gauge the pace of the instruction on how well students are keeping up with the technology. Adjustments can be made to the pace if it seems too many students are frustrated by the Blackboard tools since this first week will be the basis for their navigating Blackboard on their own the rest of the semester.

Summative Assessment

Because this is a lesson plan for the first day of a semester-long class it is too early to propose a summative assessment. This class is, however, foundational for the movement toward proficiency in using Blackboard, establishing a sense of community in the classroom, and building skills for academic success in transitioning from HS to college. One example of summative assessment may be to compare the retention rate of students in the course we offer with the retention rates of first semester freshmen from previous years.

ASSESSMENT


By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?

- Successful completion of the tasks assigned
- Active participation in the Wimba classroom

Stage Three: Learning Plan and Instruction

Blackboard is Duquesne University's secure web-based instrument for teaching and learning which is uniquely designed to facilitate the various knowledge styles of today's students. It is a repository for the faculty to store content materials and it provides a collaborative work environment for both the traditional student and the online learner through tools such as Blogs, Wikis, Discussion Boards, Journals and a virtual classroom known as Wimba. By designing effective and engaging content-based activities into the Blackboard course model, educators can customize their sites not only by subject matter but also the assessed needs of their unique student population.

The technology platform can accommodate multiple content formats inclusive of sound, audio, animations, images, graphs, and text, etc.ⁱ By providing a flexible learning environment, students can review their course content and learn at their own pace. Content can also be created outside of Blackboard; for example, a PowerPoint presentation which



can be subsequently uploaded for later viewing or a YouTube video downloaded from the internet to add diversity to the learning material and academic experience of the students.

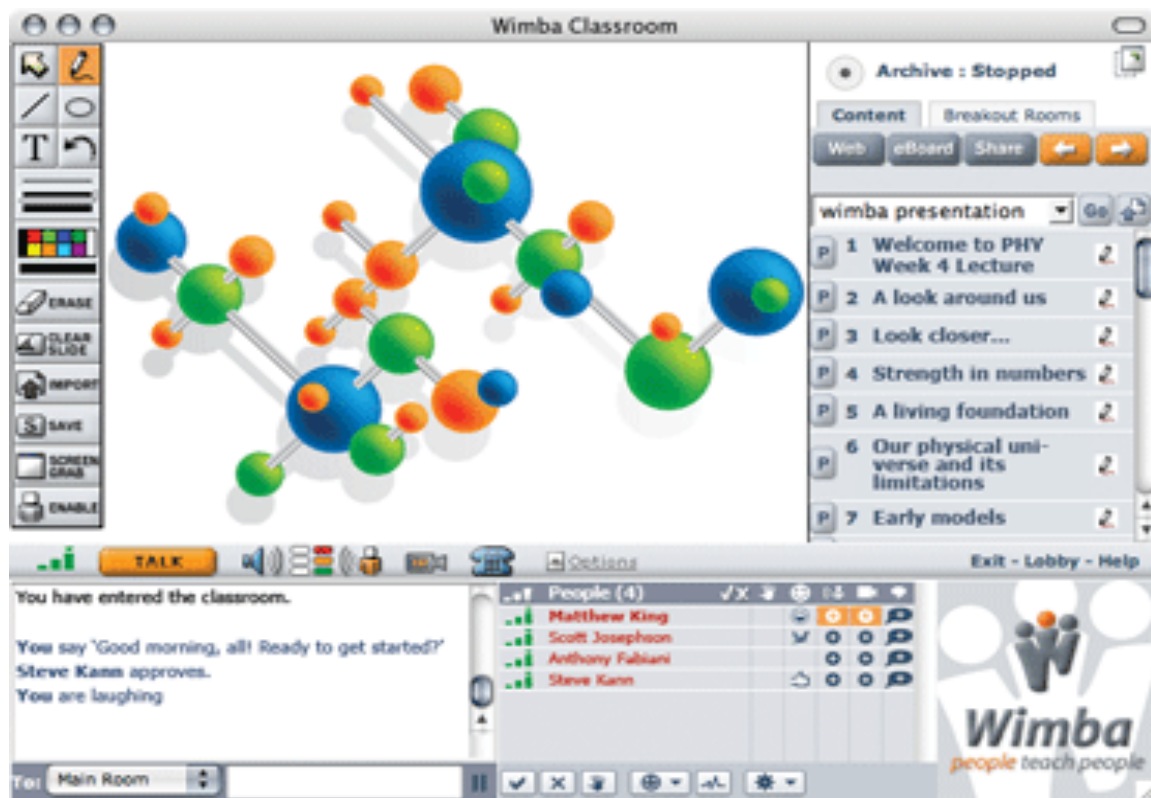
STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Blackboard is intended to be a collaborative tool that incorporates both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (offline) discussions and assessments of the college community using its resources. Blackboard is divided into three general areas: Files & Folders, Communications & Tools, and Assessment & Grades.ⁱⁱ Each of these areas is designed to facilitate coordination of information through content segmentation and personalization of information. Students will be introduced to each of these areas and instructions will be provided to lead them through an online Blackboard tutorial.

The tutorial will guide the students through the registration and password authentication process and will provide an overview of each of the major component areas. Upon completion of the tutorial, as part of a student learning assessment, students will be required to perform several tasks, which will demonstrate their understanding of the material presented and assess their skill set expertise with the effective navigation of the course site.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In an e-learning environment, incorporating a synchronous activity through an integration of Blackboard and the Wimba classroom can increase the student interest. Wimba is a virtual classroom where teachers and students can actively contribute, collaborate and share ideas and information as if they were meeting face-to-face. Wimba removes the barriers of time, distance and location for today's learners. By using web-based technologies, a community of learners can come together in a dynamic interaction of technology and education. Students can chat with their teacher or their classmates publicly or privately. They can interact with a virtual white board, view PowerPoint presentations, enter into organized debates and work in breakout rooms during the class-meeting period. Lectures can be archived as they are being presented and students can listen to them again later to reinforce their understanding and increase their interest level in the topic at a time of their choosing. Utilizing a collaborative model such as Wimba reduces cognitive overload through a balance of working memory and deep learning techniques, which ultimately enhance student interest and insight.



http://www.wimba.com/products/wimba_classroom/

For example, in this view of a Wimba classroom, students are being introduced to the molecular structure of an element in the physical world. As evidenced by the emoticons, some students are indicating their approval, some are laughing and one has stepped away. As we can see, this forum provides an interactive exchange between the instructor and their student audience. Web-based technologies such as Blackboard and Wimba provide another means for teachers to design interesting and engaging learning activities, assess understanding, and enhance critical thinking and problem solving skills of their students. These tools also enable students to enhance their academic knowledge by incorporating multiple technologies into their course work experience.

BLACKBOARD TUTORIAL

Step 1. From the Internet, go to website: <http://www.Blackboard.duq.edu>

Step 2. Under “Login Here”, enter your username and password.

Step 3. When finished using Blackboard, click the “Logout” option at the top of the page.

Bb6 Announcements
Students and Blackboard Course Information

- Faculty will begin removing students not officially registered for their courses this week. Students should see links to courses they have officially dropped removed from their MY COURSES Module. Students please contact your instructor if a course you have officially dropped remains on your list of MY COURSES.
- If you have a course using Blackboard, it will show under your MY COURSES module once you log-in.
- If your course does NOT show in the MY COURSES module, then you need to ask your professor if the course site is available to students. If the site is available and you still do not have it listed on your My Courses list, then please check your WEB ADVISOR schedule to make sure you are officially registered for the course. Only students officially registered for a course have access to Blackboard sites
- Need help with Blackboard features. Check out the STUDENT RESOURCES tab once logged in. If you need further assistance with Blackboard, contact the Help Desk at 412.396.4357 (help) or visit the Help Desk at Ground Floor Rockwell Hall.

Faculty--Need training on Blackboard?
Email bbsupport@duq.edu for more information on how to complete your Blackboard Instructor Certification training.

Login Here

Have an account? Enter your login information here and click the Login button below or the icon above the Tabs.

Need Help with your login, click on the LOGIN & TECHNICAL HELP Tab above.

USERNAME:

PASSWORD:

[Forgot your password?](#)

Bb6 Outages
Future Scheduled Outages:

Sunday, October 9, 2005 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM -Blackboard will unavailable for monthly maintenance.

For more information on Blackboard outages, please visit the [Blackboard System Outages page](#). For general technology information and information about non-Blackboard related outages, please visit the [CTS web site](#).

Last updated 9/15/2005

<http://www.duq.edu/faculty-senate/pdf/Blackboard.pdf>

Blackboard Username. The first part of your DU email address (ex: for smith123@duq.edu, the username is smith123).

Blackboard Default Password. First time users, please use the first letter of your last name (lowercase) and full social security number without spaces or hyphens. Passwords are case sensitive. Returning users, please use your current password.

OVERVIEW OF THE BLACKBOARD NAVIGATION BUTTONS

Announcements	Course updates, reminders, general announcements are displayed here. This is usually viewed as the point of entry to the course and is appears in the main course window.
Course Information	General information about the course - the syllabus is typically placed here. Course schedule may be located here.
Faculty Contact	The contact information and office hours for the course instructor.
Course Documents	Course outlines, handouts, lecture materials, and reading are posted here.
Assignments	Assignments and assessments (i.e. quizzes & surveys) are typically located in this section.
Communication	Announcements, Discussion Board, Group Pages, Roster, Send Email, Voice Board, Voice Email, Voice Podcaster, Wimba Classroom, Wimba Pronto.
eResources	Links to web sites that are related to the course are provided in this area.
Tools	Blog Tool, Calendar, Digital Drop Box, Glossary, Homepage, My Grades, Starfish, Tasks, TurningPoint Registration Tool, User Manual, and the Wiki Tool.

HELPFUL HINT

To navigate the Blackboard site, notice what is called the “breadcrumb trail” located at the top of your viewing page. This is the path you have taken to get here. To “back up” and return to a previous page, you can click on any of the locations in the breadcrumb trail to return to those pages. *Example: SYSTEMS ANALYSIS & DESIGN FALL 10 B01 (COMP_247B01_FALL_10) > COURSE DOCUMENTS*



CLPR 015 Introduction to University Success

Course Rationale

An incoming university level student will be inundated with information. Managing financial aid matters, registering for classes, maintaining an email account, and organizing login information (to name a few) are all necessary components toward the overall success of any student. Fortunately, we are in an age where technology serves as a functional and efficient medium for these necessary processes to occur. A major focal point of this seminar revolves around the mastery of this online medium. While face-to-face interaction remains invaluable to one's communication skills, it is becoming increasingly as important to hone those skills on a technological platform. Whether you are a student entering with a vast knowledge base of these technologies or a student at a technologically novice level, this seminar will allow you to refine and develop important online skills.

While face-to-face communication can be deemed as ideal in most scenarios, the need for technology-based communication continues to grow. The majority of our student population begins a college career familiar with text messaging, email, Twitter, Facebook, and a variety of other popular communication vehicles. The world of education has figured out that these communication vehicles are not only popular, but also extremely useful. Teaching students how to utilize these vehicles in an academically beneficial way is yet another major focal point of this seminar. In addition to taking advantage and capitalizing upon the popularity of these communication vehicles, this seminar takes into consideration the busy lifestyle of today's college student. The abundance of academic, athletic, social, and club activities provides yet another valuable reason for any student to maintain proficiency with technology. We live in a fast-paced world, where convenience is becoming more of a necessity than a privilege. Again, the technology is out there in order to keep up with the pace of everyday life. This seminar will allow students an opportunity to understand how technology can be implemented throughout their academic careers.

A variety of practical topics will be covered within this seminar. To further reinforce the importance of the technologies introduced, each meeting amongst students will occur via these technologies. Meeting and interacting online is the best way to learn and refine these important skills. In essence, this seminar facilitates useful information, while simultaneously placing the students in a situation to take action.



Syllabus

Duquesne University
CLPR 015 Introduction to University Success
Department of College Programs
Fall 2011 1 Credit Hour

Instructors

Adam Wasilko	Ashley Zarecky
Bill Shepardson	Doug Strahler
Huixiang Yuan	Michaela Noakes
Tammy Wiens	

Room/Time

Online Monday 5:00 - 5:50


Introduction

This course is designed to help students adjust to their new surroundings as University students. Discussions will concentrate on becoming familiar with Duquesne University—students, faculty, staff, services, and facilities—to maximize your college experience.

Course Content and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to assist students with engaging in personal, academic, university & community life. Other course objectives include:

- Assist in the transition to the university environment
 - Policies & Procedures
 - Learning styles
 - Environment
 - Student/Campus life
 - Resources
- Enhance academic skills
 - Note-taking
 - Reading
 - Time management
- Oral, Written, & Presentation Communication Skills
- Additional avenue to increase participation & communication
- Provide guidance in understanding how to use:
 - Blackboard
 - Microsoft Office
 - Online registration tutorials



Required Textbook

“An Introduction to Duquesne University”. *Student Handbook*. Duquesne University. http://www.duq.edu/student-life/student-handbook/_pdf/student-code-book-10-11.pdf.

General Conduct of Course

A. **Measurement and Assessment**

Attendance	15 points
Participation/Blackboard Discussion	30 points
Reflection Journal	30 points
Weekly Assignments	75 points
Portfolio	50 points
<i>Total Possible</i>	<i>200 points</i>

Grading

This is a pass/fail course.

B. **Incomplete Grades**

"I" Grades will be granted in extenuating circumstances only when a student has completed the majority of course requirements successfully. A Contract for Completion of Incomplete Grades must be negotiated and signed by the instructor and student. An "I" grade must be removed within a year.

C. **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are entitled to *reasonable accommodations*, as determined by the institution, after proper documentation of the disability has been received. At Duquesne University, the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services, located in room 309 Duquesne Union (412-396-6657), is responsible for determining *reasonable accommodations* and for assisting students in communicating these to faculty. Students should notify the faculty member, at the beginning of the term, if any *reasonable accommodations* are needed. Students need to be registered with the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services. Before accommodations will be granted, the faculty member should receive a memo confirming the recommendations for *reasonable accommodations* from the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services. The purpose for implementing *reasonable accommodations* is to allow for equal opportunity for students with disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate that the cognitive, behavioral and professional competencies have been acquired to a satisfactory degree in order for successful completion of the course.

We also acknowledge that additional accommodations relevant to online learning must be taken into consideration:

Issues for on-line access include compatibility with text-to-speech screen readers such as JAWS for the blind, compatibility with speech-to-text applications such as Dragon Naturally Speaking for physically and learning disabled, compatibility with screen enlargement systems for the visually impaired, and accessibility for the hearing-impaired deaf when running audiovisual materials (this last part means we would need to provide either open captioning of the audio visual or closed captioning with a button to click or a link to a transcript of the audio).

D. Course Evaluation

Students evaluate all courses at Duquesne University. A standard form is provided for this purpose and there is also an opportunity for students to offer additional comments.

E. Course Policy

I regard acts of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, such activities as plagiarism, forging an instructor's signature, stealing tests, copying themes or tests from other students, or using "crib notes or cheat sheets" as very serious offenses. Students engaging in these activities will receive an automatic failing grade (F) and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of university policy.

Course attendance is mandatory unless accident, injury or illness prevents the student from attending class. Students should attempt to inform the instructor when such occurrences occur. Unexcused absences will result in point reduction equal to the percentage of class time missed.

Course Assignments

Introduction to University Success has numerous individual and group activities to successfully complete this course. Each assignment will demonstrate students understanding of weekly discussions and activities. All assignments will be submitted to the Blackboard website by posting to their personal blog space, the discussion board or into the digital drop box.

All assignments are due prior to the start of class and the instructor will determine any special deadlines. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Course Outline

Week	Topic
1	Course Introduction & Orientation (Introduction to the Course, Classmates, & Community; How to be a Successful Distance Learner)
2	Navigating Blackboard (Introduction to Blackboard & Wimba)
3	Being a College Student (Expectations, Policies & Procedures, & Student Activities)
4	Learning Your Way Around Campus & Town (Resource centers & Local Resources)
5	Strategies to Success I (Time management & Organization)
6	Enhancing Academic Skills (Reading, Listening, Note taking, & Preparation)
7	Student Life (Dorm Life & Life outside of classes)
8	Registering for classes online (Starfish)
9	Library Orientation (Navigating the Library Website)
10	Academic Resources (Student Life, Academic Records, Human Resources)
11	Strategies to Success II (Stress & Preparing for Finals)
12	Diverse Society (Global Collaboration & Cross-Cultural Communication)
13	Leadership & Community (Leadership, Professionalism, & The Changing Society and World)
14	Your University Experience & Evaluations

* This syllabus was an adaptation of Dr. Kush's Instructional Design Syllabus

The Backwards Design Template

The Backwards Design template used here is from Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins (2004) *Understanding by Design Professional Development Workbook*. A PDF of the “Introduction is available online at http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/books/mctighe2004_intro.pdf. Accessed 11/27/2010.

STAGE ONE – DESIRED RESULTS

Establish Goals: See [syllabus](#) for the full set of instructional goals

Students will understand:	Essential Questions
There is a lot to learn in order to make a successful transition to college life	Why take this course?
Mastering the technology and skills in this course will have benefit in many other college courses	Why is the course offered online?
What Blackboard is and how to locate it on the university website	How does one successfully navigate the Blackboard site?
Many of the online tools used in this course will be utilized in other university courses across all majors	Which aspects of an online environment will enhance the students’ academic success?
Students will know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factual information about the university campus • vocabulary terms related to Blackboard and the Wimba classroom • key facets of the Blackboard learning environment 	Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access Blackboard and Wimba from their own PC • successfully navigate Blackboard in order to use the digital dropbox, online discussion, and Wimba

STAGE TWO – ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE

Performance Tasks

The instructor will know the student has mastered the skills for the first week when he or she successfully posts a personal profile in Blackboard and also is able to leave a message for the instructor in the drop box.

Other Evidence

Bloom’s taxonomy, our expectations for learning are realistically set at Stage 3: Application. It is early in the semester and we’re simply orienting students to the technology. We want to know they’ve understood the lesson and can apply it to simple navigation of the Blackboard site and Wimba classroom.



Formative Assessment

During class time in the first week of the course students will demonstrate use of Wimba tools such as putting up a green check or a red “x,” raising a hand, and using the talk button. Since this is the first time the course has been taught online, the instructor will need to gauge the pace of the instruction on how well students are keeping up with the technology. Adjustments can be made to the pace if it seems too many students are frustrated by the Blackboard tools since this first week will be the basis for their navigating Blackboard on their own the rest of the semester.

Summative Assessment

Because this is a lesson plan for the first day of a semester-long class it is too early to propose a summative assessment. This class is, however, foundational for the movement toward proficiency in using Blackboard, establishing a sense of community in the classroom, and building skills for academic success in transitioning from HS to college. One example of summative assessment may be to compare the retention rate of students in the course we offer with the retention rates of first semester freshmen from previous years.

STAGE THREE – LEARNING PLAN

Learning Activities

- PowerPoint presentation introducing
- Opportunity to logon to Blackboard in the computer lab
- Introduce students to each other in a face-to-face setting
- Orient students to the Blackboard menu and the features of the Wimba Classroom



Resources

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood. A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469-480.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529.

McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2004). The Backwards Design template. *Understanding by Design Professional Development Workbook*. A PDF of the “Introduction is available online at http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/books/mctighe2004_intro.pdf. Accessed 11/27/2010.

ⁱ <https://www.business.duq.edu/other/docs/technology/bbbasicsstu.pdf>

ⁱⁱ http://www.duq.edu/faculty-senate/_pdf/blackboard.pdf