

## Teaching in the Pandemic: Unexpected New Frontiers©

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*Professors have taught in a 24/7 world for several years. Enter the pandemic. That world—and all technology preparation we have done before it -- became the new norm. This article describes pedagogic changes that were implemented to address the pandemic challenges. Models depicting Pandemic Adjustments into Curriculum Design for a Pandemic, and Post-Pandemic Career Preparedness are presented. The importance of adaptability and flexibility by the professor and the student is addressed. A model for the Pandemic Course Design Adjustment Process is delineated. Furthermore, there is an analysis of the differences among the formats for courses that were taught during the pandemic that were scheduled to be F2F. A Blooms Taxonomy connection is made. In closing, workplace facts leading professors to look forward to potential new frontiers are explained.*

*Keywords: pandemic adaptations, career preparedness, higher education business curriculum design, Blooms Taxonomy, post-pandemic*

### INTRODUCTION

We've taught in a 24/7 world for several years. Enter the pandemic. That world—and all technology preparation we have done before it -- became the new norm. Like many universities we closed face-to-face teaching late Thursday in a week of March 2020 and reopened as a full-online provider the next Tuesday. My teaching world changed—and I wonder how much of the change is now the new norm and the new expectation of students. In this paper, I will cover innovative strategies implemented during the pandemic to ensure that academic standards, student performance, and course outcomes were successful. My experiences will include during the beginning of the pandemic, when only remote education was possible synchronously in the originally planned time frame, through the use of a hybrid approach to on-ground classes that were taught. I present a formula for teaching in uncertain times.

Teaching excellence= (knowledge of the subject matter) X (realization of the professional world's demands, needs and expectations) X (knowing & understanding your audience of students) X (adaptability & flexibility) X (pedagogic & andragogic tools, including technology tools) X (ability to teach and convey your passion for the subject to your students). During the pandemic, professors re-evaluated “the norm”. Much of what transpired during the pandemic has led me, and other professors, to question what we saw as the “norm” for excellence in teaching.

## **REALIZATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD'S DEMANDS, NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS**

Regarding knowledge of the subject matter, that essential element of teaching excellence remained the same during the pandemic. As the world quickly changed at the workplace, including policies, procedures, work practices and a shifting workforce, it was crucial for professors to realize that the pre-pandemic professional world's demands, needs and expectations were shifting quickly. Students need, now, to be prepared for a different work world. As Busteed (2021) states, "virtual internships and jobs are here to stay and will grow in prevalence" (para.8). Companies experienced more automation, the use of artificial intelligence, streamlined techniques, and employees who--in many cases --could be very productive in a remote setting and may be able to manage the integration of work and family differently yet successfully.

Students enhanced and upskilled their ability to manage projects in a remote setting. Therefore, they can be comfortable with a remote workplace. As stated by Champagne and Granja (2021), "COVID-19 has changed the world, and academia is no exception. It has profoundly changed the way people interact with each other, the way they work and the way they learn. Universities are now realizing that teaching practices will ultimately never completely return to the previous model."

## **KNOWING AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE OF STUDENTS**

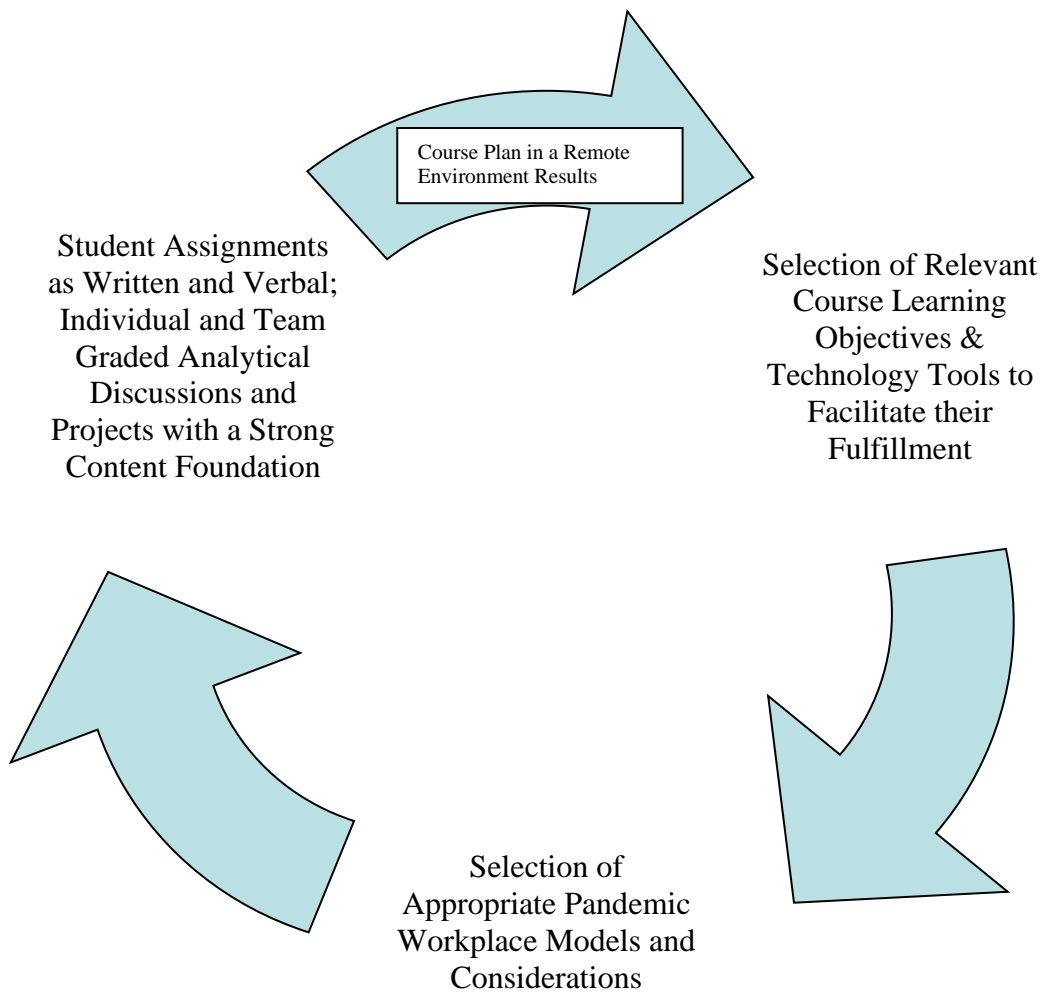
Generation Z as well as Millennial students want individualized attention and feedback. During the pandemic, specifically, one approach that was key to moving forward was increased individual attention in a true 24/7 world. Although I pride myself in knowing each of my students, when the pandemic shutdown occurred, there was a challenge of doing that in a quickly remote setting, with larger class sizes than would be typical of an online class. Students were frightened, especially in the beginning of the pandemic, by what was happening in the world and the uncertainty that they were seeing. In that environment, the need to be very cognizant of students' comments, facial expressions, changes in quality of work, and certainly health concerns became paramount.

My courses implement simulations. Effective teamwork and spirit became more important. There was an increased need for positive reinforcement with students and casually "checking in".

## **ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY**

My main method of assessment in my classes is discussion about specific course material, the use of simulations, and experiential learning projects. This facilitated the movement to a fully online format from a face-to-face format. Yet it is reassuring to know that I am not the only one who uses these techniques for learning assessment. These approaches will grow in universities according to Miyagawa and Perdue (2020), who state that "during the pandemic, a number of instructors reported reducing or eliminating quizzes and exams, and instead creating more group projects and oral assessments for measuring learning outcomes." Figure 1 (See below.) depicts the curricular design adjustments made to facilitate students' career preparedness in a changing world. Responding to the pandemic-driven meeting limitations, changes were made to work in small groups and strategize about projects. I attempted to implement a face-to-face pedagogic model in a virtual setting as much as feasible. I refrained from saying we were not "on-Ground" anymore, to simply stressing the fact that we could continue to see each other face-to-face through the available technology. Therefore, my mindset was to virtually, in real time, move from one "breakout" room to another and interact with the students. After than process, we came to together as one group, and each group would do a small report-out of their accomplishments or main discussion points. I could reinforce their accomplishments. Then, by sharing my screen, I could shift to lecture material to supplement their breakout room experience. When the pandemic became prevalent, some students traveled back home to other countries, so attention to various time zones will be important. Fortunately, I've taught students in other parts of the world before in online classes, so I pulled those skills out of my toolkit.

**FIGURE 1**  
**PANDEMIC ADJUSTMENTS INTO CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR A PANDEMIC, AND**  
**POST-PANDEMIC CAREER PREPAREDNESS**



Even as restrictions began to slowly open, a hybrid format was utilized as needed. On-ground class group work became a social-distancing challenge. It will take a long time to forget the day that my students sat on the floor to ensure social distancing. It was on that day that I decided that teaching in the “normal” way, like the pre-pandemic environment in which students could huddle together to do small group work, was impossible. Therefore, I used the technology that was available and whenever small group work was an integral part of the class, the class met remotely. My challenge was to ensure that the remote setting was in such a dynamic way that I could “remove the invisible walls” of a virtual class and closely mimic the interaction of each student that I expect in a F2F setting. Therefore, either through Zoom or the Canvas Conference mode, I set up breakout rooms. Students commented on this feature as a beneficial element of their experience. The students enjoyed the breakout rooms for teamwork, and I could switch from one group to another. I think students were a bit unsure of how the new process would work, but they gave very positive feedback at the end of class. Additionally, online marketing simulations and hands-on projects continued.

I realized that instead of “why” are we in this situation, I wanted to adopt a “why not try something new” approach. For example, to keep students engaged for 75 minutes during a remote class session, I

started to use simple gamification in my Training and Development course. Not only did this addition to my curriculum add some fun and humor to the class, it also role modeled how to engage a group of professional trainees.

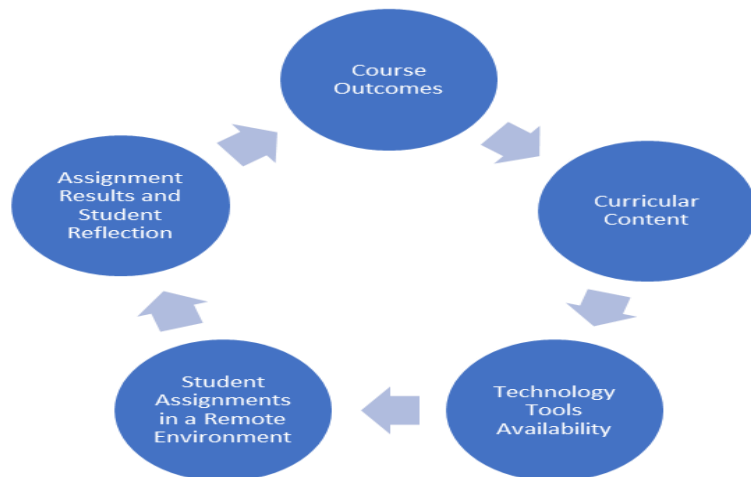
Changes occurred not only in the classroom, but also in relation to academic advising. I met my advisees through individual Google Hangouts. (I already set up Google Appointments time slots for the students to schedule a meeting with me, so the transition was relatively easy.) I always make individual tentative advising grids and update them during each student’s meeting. That process is continuing, and students are handling the change well. It may be more convenient for students who juggle work and academics. I can meet with them virtually at any location that meets their needs. Due to students’ favorable remarks, this appears to be a pandemic-initiated change that will continue to be implemented after the pandemic.

## **PEDAGOGIC AND ANDRAGOGIC TOOLS, INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY TOOLS**

Due to technology that exists on my campus, as well as existing policies, synchronous, online class sessions occurred during the initial pandemic shutdown. I continued to use interactive, smart textbooks with a heightened use of the learning assessment tools. There were times, especially in the early days of limitations in Canvas Conference mode and Zoom, that I would pre-record my lectures. We would start class as one group, and I would review –in real-time -- the day’s agenda. Then, I would direct the students to view and take notes on my lecture. I set a specific time to return to our virtual class setting. I took attendance frequently in different times throughout the class, and that quickly eliminated students “leaving” or not being engaged in the virtual classroom. As noted, for my previously on-ground classes, I used the Canvas Conference option, and met during the regular class time “live”. I made pre-recorded videos, related assignments, and posted them for students to view during –or sometimes after—class. We discussed that material “live” during our class sessions. I could call on students and they clicked on their mics to respond in an interactive way. Everyone’s webcam was on throughout class so we could see each other as we would in a F2F setting. I also utilized the Conference’s virtual breakout rooms. The students enjoyed the breakout rooms for teamwork, and I could switch/move from one group to another for conversations. End-of-year presentations by teams used GotoMeetings, in our first semester during the pandemic, with each team visually sharing their materials, and all teammates—with webcams and mics on—sharing their reports. Learning Assessment methods also included more short, business-style writing and more discussions.

Figure 2 (See below.) displays the course design adjustment process that occurred during the pandemic. The model maintains fundamental considerations, such as course outcomes, with adaptations implementing technology and revised assignments suitable to pandemic challenges.

**FIGURE 2**  
**PANDEMIC COURSE DESIGN ADJUSTMENT PROCESS**



## ABILITY TO TEACH AND CONVEY YOUR PASSION FOR THE SUBJECT TO YOUR STUDENTS

It is essential to think creatively within your technology capacity and expand your abilities. I needed to expand the students' community via technology, with alumni involvement and experiential learning. As stated in a Harvard study (2021, Feb 8), "building a community does not require a physical campus. Focus on fostering engagement online through small sessions, deliberate in class connectors, and breakout rooms. Invite alumni and special guests to virtual classrooms and events".

In my International Marketing class, while we still met "on ground" pre-pandemic, the class studied and did informal presentations about the impact of the Coronavirus on global marketing actions. Furthermore, we had a speaker scheduled just after we moved to being online. I contacted the speaker, a manager of global accounts, who is a Business-Marketing major alumna, and asked her if she and I could Skype over the weekend so I could show that recording to my class. Not only did she say yes and gave a meaningful presentation that was shown to the students in class through a recording in Canvas, but she also made a special handout for the students to complement her remarks. The class was structured so that we began in the Canvas Conference format and had a general introduction to class. Then, just as if we were on ground, I introduced the speaker and the students moved to the recorded presentation link that was on our course's homepage. After the presentation, we returned to the conference format and students had a lively discussion about the speaker. I have been so impressed by the students' adaptability. As a Seton Hill alum, myself, I am proud of our university, and the Setonians who are living our motto, "Hazard yet Forward" and as Mother Seton said, "Every day is a new beginning."

In my Advanced Marketing Seminar, that same semester, a Business Administration- Marketing and Human Resources major alum, who is now an E-Commerce Associate Marketing Manager, at the beginning of the semester, offered to provide the students with an experiential learning project in which they conducted marketing research and recommended corresponding marketing actions. Because he is not located nearby, he originally met the students via Skype while we were still on ground. He graciously agreed to again meet the students through a GotoMeeting format so that each team could present their work. The class and I practiced before the presentation day, so students were comfortable showing their PowerPoint presentations, while each team had their webcams up and they rotated who was the speaker. At the end of the presentations, which went very well according to our guest, we had a customary question and answer session in which the students were able to elaborate on some of their findings. It was a good learning experience for the students. We had students from five countries, and they all were active in the presentations and the question-and-answer sessions! It demonstrated wonderful commitment on the part of a graduate and my students. It was made possible through technology at an innovative university.

Although I have taught fully F2F courses, and fully online courses, the pandemic has led me to analyze the differences among the formats for the courses that I taught during the pandemic that were scheduled to be F2F. (See Table 1 below.)

**TABLE 1  
COMPARISON OF ONLINE AND F2F FORMATS**

<b>Key Course Elements</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Traditional F2F</b>
<b>Simulation</b>	Students appreciated the online, remote nature of the simulation	
<b>Group meetings</b>	Virtually, teams met using devices and laptops.	Students grouped together in class to strategize, discuss each period's results, and to plan the next period's actions

<b>Outside Speakers</b>	Improved technology for greater clarity across large distances	
<b>Experiential Learning</b>	Facilitated conference, professional atmosphere	Because of classroom physical setting, report-outs were professional, yet felt like “class assignments”
<b>Team camaraderie</b>	Signed team agreements Largely productive teams Understanding about students with athletic, work, home-life conflicts, accommodations were made so all team members could meet using technology	Signed team agreements Usually, productive teams Some impatience with conflicting schedules that impeded in-person meetings

### BLOOM’S TAXONOMY

The Blooms Taxonomy model (Technology for Learners, Applying Bloom's Taxonomy to the Classroom), shown below (See Figure 3 below.), is familiar to many professors. During the pandemic I believe that levels of the model were demonstrated in unique ways. Thompson (2021) calls for “a **learning** ecosystem that matches today's **pandemic**-influenced business needs” (para 2). For example, for level 3, “Applying”, new pandemic information that related to course content was provided. Students were challenged to apply that information, and answer questions or solve problems related to the current events that they were living. Sometimes college students may prefer to live in the “ivory-tower” of their institution. Yet, given the challenges, restrictions & barriers that were forced upon them by outside, “real” events, any student who wanted an idealized academic world had that desire shattered and forced into the inevitable connection between the outside world and their preparation for their future careers. For level 4, “Analyzing”, students were given a special assignment to develop an internal marketing program for employees to encourage them to be vaccinated. Their results were presented virtually and an outside Human Resources professional, also an alumnus of the school, observed their presentations and provided feedback. She also shared what her company was doing in relationship to the topic. In connection with level 5, “Evaluating”, students needed to justify why a company would encourage employees and potentially reward employees for being vaccinated. Demonstrating research skills and intellectual curiosity, their work included considerations for those who for religious or medical reasons could not be vaccinated but did not want to feel marginalized at the workplace.

These topics provided unique opportunities for students to extrapolate current events into their classroom content and then to be able to articulate how they would implement certain policies and procedures at the workplace. For example, in one of my marketing courses, students developed “Kindness” creative projects to address what the news sources reported as a plethora of lack of empathy in various corners of the world. The details of that assignment are noted below.

Marketing Course: Kindness Marketing Campaign  
Fall 2020

*The rationale for this marketing campaign: Given the challenging pandemic times in which we find ourselves, empathy and compassion are essential in business as well as in other aspects of our lives. Jesus said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matthew 7:12). Therefore, this campaign endeavors to encourage a target audience to demonstrate and implement kindness.*

**From syllabus:** 15% Marketing brainstorming/idea generation/research assignments-individual or/and teams: May include Marketing “Kindness” campaign

- 1) Objective: To develop an original, creative marketing campaign around the importance of kindness in today's world and how to solve the problem when kindness does not occur.
- 2) Due: (a) **Step 1** is due at the end of class time on October 8. Each team will post a Word document with their teammates names and with their work completed before class ends on October 8. Be sure that you post a Microsoft Word not PDF document to Turnitin.  
(b) Final submission: Week 12. (The syllabus states that this is due week 10. However, due to the timing of World Hunger Panel, the due date is be moved to Week 12.)
- 2) Process: Working collaboratively, an evenly balanced manner, in your New Shoes Sim teams, to develop an effective, efficient marketing campaign.  
Step I (October 8)
- 3) Be creative, original, and unique: Name your campaign  
-Do NOT use another company's, person's student's campaign
- 4) You must incorporate at least one of these quotes directly in your campaign:
  1. "It sometimes lessens personal sorrow to compare our condition with the case of others." *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*
  2. "Because that's what kindness is. It's not doing something for someone else because they can't, but because you can." *Andrew Iskander*
  3. "The level of our success is limited only by our imagination and no act of kindness, however small is ever wasted." *Aesop*
  4. "Transparency, honesty, kindness, good stewardship, even humor, work in businesses at all times." *John Gerzema*
  5. "A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees." *Amelia Earhart*
  6. "It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression." *Fred Rogers*
- 5) Develop a campaign that may be posted outside of class for viewing by other campus members.
- 6) Consider and delineate who are your target audience? Consider:
  - a) Donation to the campus Food Locker
  - b) The importance of Respecting Diversity and Inclusion
  - c) Climate Change
  - d) Hunger Insecurity in the USA
- 7) Include information from the following:
  - The recent Climate Panels
  - The recent World Hunger Panel
  - Three library-based LibGuides: Business-Marketing academically credible recent (2018, 2019, 2020 copyrights.)
- 7) Summarize the main elements/components of your campaign (Think Marketing Mix.). Delineate at least 5 key aspects.

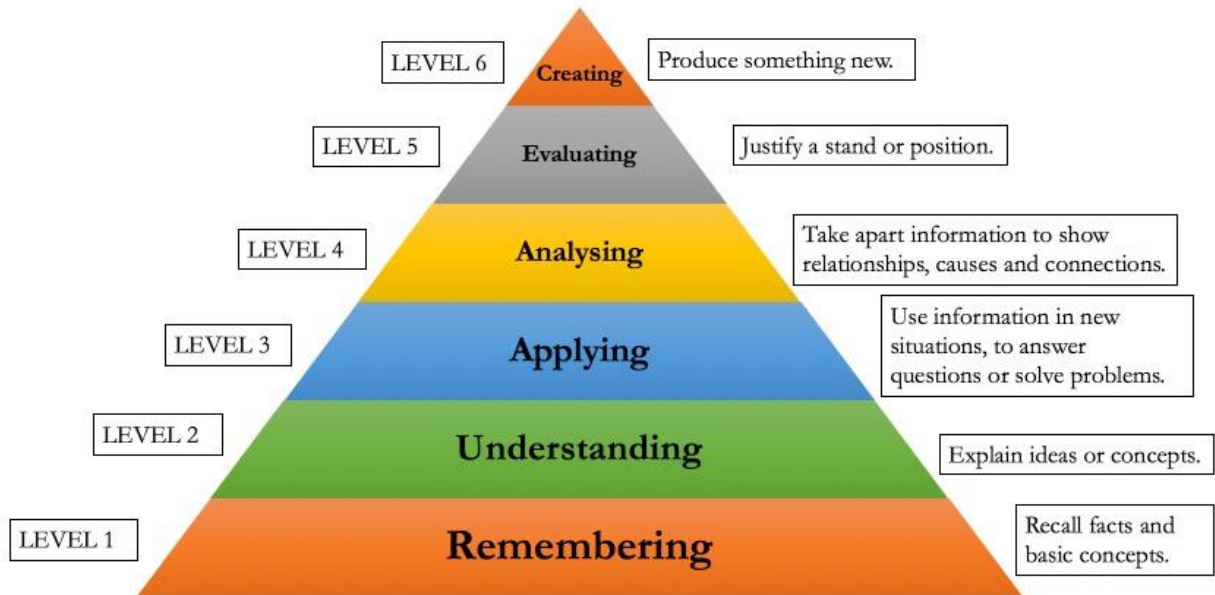
## Step II

*This is not an all-inclusive list.*

- Establish your hypothetical budget.
- Establish your marketing campaign's Call to Action.
- Select your media, and brick & mortar (B&M) promotional reach.
- Plan your Place Strategy.
- Develop your B&M and media messages, with three actual examples, including a flyer.
- Delineate specifically how you will measure results.

As seen above, the assignment incorporated key marketing concepts and approaches. It required students to extrapolate theoretical constructs to current, in many cases unprecedented business occurrences. Students were successful in these creative campaigns and gained from the professor bringing “the outside world” into the classroom to elevate their learning.

**FIGURE 3  
BLOOM’S TAXONOMY**



**DON'T FORGET THE PROFESSOR: OUR CONCERNS**

Before concluding, it is essential to comment upon the importance, during a pandemic, to remember that professors are human. The nature of our tasks and our teaching priorities were quickly shifting during the pandemic. Some professors considered career changes. We, too, were unsure of what was happening in the world. We, too, were concerned about our families’ and friends’ health and safety. The institution in which I teach was wise enough to offer services for the mental health of all staff, faculty, and students. There were periodic faculty and staff meetings offered where individuals could discuss their concerns and thoughts about what was transpiring.

However, in my opinion it was essential that I demonstrated optimism in the classroom. I had to “compartmentalize” my personal worries while in a classroom setting. Teaching Business classes, I reminded students that they were building a skill set to work in a remote setting, and to display extraordinary adaptability, flexibility, and fortitude that they might not have had to demonstrate in a pre-pandemic classroom. Whenever students demonstrated maturity, fortitude, and particularly collegial teamwork, I encouraged them. When students completed assignments that may have seemed more challenging because they were lacking social interaction, I encouraged them. Successes in the classroom were celebrated verbally, with applause, with letting students know that there was a special program virtually offered on campus, etc.

Furthermore, I could not have accomplished what I did during the pandemic without a very strong technology staff on my campus. During the summers of 2020 and 2021, there were technology boot camps, webinars that were offered for several weeks to help train faculty in any areas where they felt that there were gaps. Anytime that a challenge arose in a classroom that was virtual or moving to a face-to-face



setting, our IT department was quick to respond, to help set up cameras in the classroom for remote learners, etc.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS: LOOKING FORWARD**

Should we revert to pre-pandemic teaching styles? Saint George, Strauss, Meckler, Heim, and Natanson (2021, March) state that “school systems in America are not done with remote learning. They want more.” Yet, they go on to say that the pandemic showed that “most students learn best in person.” How does that information apply to those future workers who will never return to a physical setting? To university students who need to adapt and learn productively in a remote or hybrid setting, just as they may be required to in their jobs? How do we prepare students for a virtual workplace in an in-person classroom? Is one benefit of a bad situation, caused by the pandemic, that Business students are more prepared for the workplace than their predecessors in the classroom?

As Henderson (2021) states, it is critical that organizations realize a continuous process to develop employees, spanning a journey that must occur to future-proof careers by teaching the right skills at the right time (para 2). Gen Z is more comfortable with the notion of remote work as their normal. After all, they grew up with smartphones, high speed Internet, and social media. They went to school online even before the pandemic. They do want flexibility at work, and some face-to-face networking (Cruszvergara, 2022, para 3,5). Sahadi (2022) found that work from home is commonplace. “Among Americans with jobs that can be done remotely, 59% of employees are still working from home all or much of the time, according to research by the Pew Research Center. This is well above the 23% who did frequently before the pandemic. Furthermore, among those who have a workplace outside of their homes, 61% said they are choosing to work from home. 60% of workers with jobs that can be done from home say they would like to work from home all or most of the time when the pandemic is over. That is up from 54% in 2020. The biggest reason--76%-- state that working from home is their preference.” This information seems to lead us in higher education to realize that students must continue to be prepared for a fully remote or a hybrid format at work.

Regarding Millennials and Generation Z, there are mixed research results among analysts. One of the demographers, Jenkins (2022) states, “Millennials and Gen Z easily adapted due to their digital nativeness. Eventually, experienced managers and leaders developed a whole new appreciation for the ease, effectiveness, and possibilities of remote work. The once anti-remote work decisionmakers became pro work from anywhere.” However, many Gen Z workers are concerned that full-remote work will threaten their career advancement, strong work relationships, their growing influence with a group at work, delegation of work to them by more experienced employees, mentoring opportunities, understanding of a face-to-face work culture, and lack of attendance in meetings that discuss the industry and would expand their awareness of their business sector. Additionally, they are concerned that they will lose out on experiencing the culture that is present in F2F office setting (para 2,6,8). In one study, 40% of college students and recent graduates stated that they prefer fully in-person work; 19% stated they want to work remote. In contrast, only 12% of current office workers prefer full in-person work. In that study, 66% of Gen Z stated that they want in-person feedback from their managers, rather than receiving a written report or chatting over zoom. Additionally, 71% of Gen Z employees say they miss interacting with their coworkers in person, compared to 61% of Millennials. In contrast though, among Generation Z who were surveyed in the fall of 2020, 69% said they would like to work remotely at least half of the time (Janin, 2022). As we learned during the pandemic, a pulse on individuals’ perceptions and adaptability requires an ability to quickly pivot on the part of their professors. Part of our job is to prepare students for their futures. Fox (2022) states that about 43% of companies are offering hybrid models. How this impacts our education may prove interesting, and potentially challenging, in the years ahead.

In any case, our academic lives are forever changed. There is, as Ozimet and Stanton (2022) state, an “upside of approaches to work they would never have otherwise considered” (para. 1). That may be very true for higher education.

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