Natural Disasters, the new norm in New York City – Are we prepared to guarantee academic continuity?

The past two years, New York has been affected by a tropical storm and a hurricane, and according to weather experts it is highly probable to experience more disasters like Hurricane Sandy in the future. Given the severity of the last hurricane, and the impact on every aspect of our lives, many questions arise about how we can guarantee academic continuity in our schools.

Contingency plans for disasters and other emergencies have long ago been established at CUNY and the majority of educational institutions. The use of technology in these plans has been fundamental to reach as many people as possible with essential information; for instance, CUNY uses a text and voice messaging system to send alerts of emergencies via telephone (mobile and land line) and email. Hostos CC also makes use of social media to alert the college community about any emergency.

EdTech gathered a number of faculty members’ impressions about their experience with the learning disruptions caused by Hurricane Sandy, how they managed to overcome the obstacles, and what they suggest if future class interruptions happen. These responses reflect the general sense from the faculty who responded to our questions.

How has Hurricane Sandy impacted your teaching planning

“The hurricane forced the rescheduling of all my midterm exams, as well as various assignments. However, as my classes use Blackboard regularly, I was able to update them with new due dates immediately through announcements and emails.”

“…the daily flow of academic life was disturbed. Students who require consistency and contact with their professors may have had difficulty getting back on track once school resumed. For those who lost power, they also lost the ability to stay current or to use the time off from class to catch up on reading and assignments.”

“Hurricane Sandy was an unprecedented challenge from various points. Because the college was closed, we had no central area to manage staff and faculty and basically worked off many details online… Although not immediately affected by the storm, our students still had difficulty reporting back to class immediately after the storm… As a result, teachers had to catch students up individually so that instruction was not affected and the curriculum was implemented as planned.”

If you used Blackboard: How did the use of Blackboard (or any other technology) help you overcome the obstacles to reach academic continuity?

“Our teachers and students have always used Blackboard to extend class instruction, to assign independent assignments...
connected to educational field trips and to provide coverage in case a teacher was absent and there was or wasn’t a substitute. The use of Blackboard was extremely important during the storm, as teachers were able to post updates, communicate emergency announcements and to conduct their teaching remotely.”

“I used Blackboard to update my classes with new due dates for assignments and the midterms. However, I also posted online all the work that was supposed to have been submitted in class during the week after the hurricane. Most of the students completed these new online assignments, all submitted on private blogs.”

“It provided information, it allowed us to be reassured (or to share concerns) about our colleagues, and it gave our students who could access it the chance to hear from us.”

“The use of Blackboard to compensate for the missed time was invaluable as it avoided physical stress of adding to already full schedules”

What advantages or limitations have you encountered?

“The use of Blackboard to compensate for the missed time was invaluable as it avoided physical stress of adding to already full schedules. It also allowed the missed lessons to be eased into the schedule over a period of time rather than on one assigned day.”

“…The reason it worked in CLIP was that teachers were expected to have been trained in the use of BB and had to use it at least minimally to post their syllabus and at least one class plan in case they were out sick. This was a good prerequisite that helped with the smooth use of BB to make up for loss of class time. The other challenge was that two students who are from other CUNY colleges and are in CLIP could not access BB and were to be communicated by email, which added another burden for the instructor.”

“For my non-hybrid students, the use of the blogs was new, and as such there was some technical confusion. However, students emailed me and I quickly resolved the issues, generally by repeating the instructions I had posted online.”

What would you recommend to other faculty to guarantee academic continuity in case of future disasters like Hurricane Sandy?

“I would recommend that all classes have some basic information on their Blackboard site, like the syllabus. This, in conjunction with the ability to communicate regularly with your classes via announcements and group emails, will ensure a certain amount of continuity during crises like the hurricane.”

“I do think in future, especially in teacher-ed because many of us had to do it when we were teachers in elementary or high schools, we should consider having emergency plans (lesson plans with assignments and assessments) that include information, resources, tasks, and assessments that students can resort to should the college be closed again for several days. This “substitute folder” (to borrow a teaching phrase) can use the last topic or two in the syllabi or provide an ancillary topic that still addresses SLOs; its implementation could satisfy course requirements.”

“Teachers need training. They need to rehearse using BB in the course of their regular semester so that they feel comfortable using this platform in a dynamic and very productive way whether there is or there is no emergency. Students also need to be trained and comfortable using BB.”

The use of the technology appeared to have helped these faculty members to overcome the disruptions of Hurricane Sandy; and although many challenges needed to be addressed, these showed to be manageable. The urgency to develop an academic continuity plan is clear, and the first step for this plan can start by simply using one of the technology resources already available in most Universities, a learning management system (Blackboard in the case of CUNY) to make essential information available to students like the syllabus, and important dates and announcements. The Office of Educational Technology (EdTech) has started and will continue with the campaign to encourage faculty to use Blackboard and post their syllabus as a first step. Additionally, EdTech has created a course template with essential resources (University grading, plagiarism and attendance policies; links to all student support services offered by the college; instructions in every section for the instructors, etc.), which is applied to all course shells in Blackboard. Faculty members only need to make their courses available for students to benefit from these resources. I invite you to visit the EdTech’s website to find more resources, and training dates: http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/edtech
The New Interactive Blackboard tools

-by George Rosa

One of the best new additions to the Blackboard 9.1 toolset is Collaborate, Blackboard’s web conferencing application specifically designed for an eLearning environment. With Collaborate you create virtual classrooms and meeting spaces, where you can share meetings, lectures, presentations, seminars and other events in real time. Anyone who is an instructor of a course can use Collaborate as part of their instructional activities, no matter whether his or her course is in the classroom, hybrid or asynchronous. If you are an instructor and can access Blackboard, you can use Collaborate. In addition, the recent Collaborate 12 upgrade gives us Collaborate Mobile, allowing access to Collaborate with Apple’s mobile devices.

At the core of Blackboard Collaborate is web conferencing. Collaborate at its most basic level is a web conferencing application with similar features and functions to commercial applications like Adobe Connect and GoToMeeting, but it is designed specifically for education and distance learning. It gives you the functionality you need to support a twenty-first century teaching and learning environment, with two-way audio, multi-point video, interactive whiteboard, application and desktop sharing, rich media, breakout rooms, and session recording. Educators and students can engage one another as if they were in a traditional classroom.

Lets go over some of Collaborate’s features:

Streaming media: audio, video, chat
With Collaborate you can conduct a lesson where students (the “participants”) can see and hear you (the “moderator”) remotely via real-time video and audio that streams through the web, as long as you use a computer with a microphone and web-cam and they have access to a computer with audio and video cards. You also have the ability to hear and see your students because of its two way audio and multipoint video, which allows for up to six videos to stream simultaneously, when setup properly at their end. During the session, you as the moderator can control who among the students/participants are seen and heard. This allows you to virtually call on participants or allow them to raise their hands and ask questions that others can hear and view, just as in an actual classroom setting.

All this live video stuff makes some a little uncomfortable, either for privacy or technical reasons (although many, including your students, are familiar now with streaming video communication due to the widespread use of Skype). For most instruction the ideal approach is for students to participate in the sessions through live chat, where instructors and students type in their questions, answers and comments in real time, where submissions can be seen in the continuously scrolling chat window. This allows everyone to participate without worrying about audio and video setup. And most instructors who use Collaborate in their teaching choose not to have their own video camera on during the lesson, allowing a photo of themselves, which can be uploaded permanently into Collaborate, to represent them.

...Collaborate gives you the functionality you need to support a 21st century teaching and learning environment...

Interactive Whiteboard, Shared Desktop and Applications
The default view of a Collaborate session includes a virtual whiteboard, which looks and functions similarly to a Smart board. Text and shapes can be entered and arranged, images, screen captures and PowerPoint slides can be inserted to create a live streaming presentation. The Whiteboard can also be exported as a PDF document and saved, similar to the Smart board.

The instructor can also switch to “Desktop View,” allowing him or her to share documents opened on the desktop, and “Application Share,” allowing the instructor to conduct walkthroughs and demonstrations of applications and websites. Students can actually use the applications and websites as they are being shared.

Breakout rooms
The instructor/administrator has the ability to divide the presentation into multiple simultaneous group sessions simulating breakout meetings. In each of the breakout rooms the instructor can designate a student as an administrator or presenter, giving him or her control of the whiteboard for student-led sessions.
Recording Sessions
Collaborate gives you the ability to record sessions. This tool can also be used to record a presentation which is not part of a live streaming session for student viewing online, much like lecture-capture recording using Tegrity or Camtasia, and can potentially replace those applications.

Collaborate Mobile
Collaborate 12, the latest version of Collaborate in our Blackboard 9.1 toolset, includes Blackboard Mobile, allowing access to sessions through Apple mobile devices - iPads, iPhones and iPods. A mobile collaboration application, of course, adds a great advantage. The disadvantages are that Collaborate Mobile can’t be used with android or other mobile devices, and moderators lose many control tools for the sessions that are at their disposal in the desktop version.

There are many other tools and features in Collaborate that can expand your instruction whether or not your course has an online component. You are welcome to explore Collaborate - just enter one of your Blackboard courses to access it. EdTech will be offering Introductory Collaborate workshops and the staff will happily assist you in showing you how Collaborate can be part of your pedagogical repertoire.

MOOCs
-by Iber Poma
Techologists have a predilection to use acronyms for everything in the Computer World and the acronym MOOC is not the exception. MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Course. It is an online course intended for extensive participation and open access via the Internet. Above all, these courses are free to enroll. MOOCs are a recent development in the area of distance education. Although the design of and participation in a MOOC may be similar to online college or university courses, MOOCs typically do not award credits to students enrolled at colleges. However, assessment of learning may be done for certification.

A number of MOOC projects have emerged independently, such as Coursera (https://www.coursera.org/), Udacity (http://www.udacity.com/), and edX (https://www.edx.org/). The reputation of the creators, backing institutions, and of course financial support of these MOOCs has helped all MOOCs gain significant public attention in 2012.

Classes are designed to help you master the material. When you take MOOC classes, you will watch lectures taught by renowned professors, learn at your own pace, test your knowledge, and reinforce concepts through interactive exercises. You will also connect with a worldwide community of thousands of students learning together with you.

Available topics include the Humanities, Medicine, Biology, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Business, Computer Science, and many others. Whether you’re looking to improve your resume, advance your career, or just learn more and expand your knowledge, you can find courses that will be of interest.

Two key features seem predominant in all MOOC courses:
• Open access. MOOC participants do not need to be a registered student in a school to “take” a MOOC, and are not required to pay a fee. Anyone in the world can enroll in a course.
• Scalability. Many traditional courses depend upon a small ratio of students to teacher, but the “massive” in MOOC suggests that the course is designed to support an indefinite number of participants.

There are many benefits as well as challenges when we use MOOCs as a source for knowledge development. Here are some benefits:

• Learning can occur anywhere rather than solely in a classroom setting.
• All work, thoughts and instruction can be shared, critiqued and viewed by all participants.
• All that is needed to participate is an internet connection.
• Students are often afforded a wide variety of assignments to choose from (In contrast with contemporary education systems which require all students to submit the same assignment at the same time.
• MOOCs are free for all who are interested.
• Participants do not have to be enrolled in the institution
which hosts the MOOC.

- The course is available all the time. Student can choose when to “take” the course.
- Networking.

These are the challenges:

- The need for basic digital literacy.
- The students’ need for self-regulation of learning.
- The potential for minor interaction with the course.
- The lack of in-person, real world socializing, presenting and practical experience.
- The increased likelihood of academic dishonesty, particularly with online examinations, due to a lack of regulation and supervision.
- Technical difficulties associated with the complete reliance on computers and internet connectivity.

Hybrid Initiative Update

-by Kate Lyons

The Hybrid Initiative, an annual incentive-based project which began in 2007 to encourage faculty to develop and teach hybrid courses, continued in the Fall 2012 with a new cohort of participants. The mentor/mentee model of support for developers continued, though mentors were paired with two mentees rather than one (and received an increased financial incentive as a result of mentoring two participants). We also introduced “sharing teams.” Past hybrid course developers could “share” their course with other members of their departments. They agreed to mentor the new hybrid instructors and help them adapt their Blackboard sites for their own courses. We had three sharing teams for the first time this semester.

On November 30th Carlos Guevara, Kate Lyons, Jacki DiSanto, Sandy Figueroa and George Rosa presented Building a Community of Practice for Hybrid Instruction at Hostos at the 11th Annual CUNY IT Conference that took place at John Jay College. The presentation focused primarily on the different models for providing support for hybrid course developers—workshops, facilitated discussions, structuring the incentive payments and finally, the mentor/mentee relationship which has proven so successful on this campus. Conference participants were engaged in the discussion and provided great feedback.

Since the new mentor-mentee model of support for new course developers was initiated, we’ve seen 100% of faculty who begin developing a course in the hybrid initiative, complete the development and go on to teach the course. Many have continued with the hybrid initiative, either developing and teaching additional hybrid courses or acting as mentors for faculty who are new to teaching in the hybrid mode. Please contact EdTech if you are interested in more information about teaching Hybrid Courses!

Hostos Social Network (HSN)

-by Francisco Ordóñez

One of the best features of the Hostos Social Network (HSN) is that it allows its members to create and update blogs. All they need is internet access and to navigate to the following address: http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/

What is a blog on HSN?

The word “blog” is a blend of the terms web and log, leading to web log, weblog, and finally blog. Creating, authoring a blog, maintaining a blog or adding an article to an existing blog is called blogging. Individual articles on a blog are called “blog posts” or simple “posts”. A person who posts these entries is called a blogger. Also HSN allows the creation of “pages” which can function like any web page, including a menu.
The term “blogging” refers to a medium that allows a blog user to broadcast blog posts to the cyber community. WordPress is one of the most popular blogging sites that has been recognized by many educators. HSN is powering by WordPress for the use at HCC. WordPress is free and open source: it now powers 8.5% of websites in the country. It allows users to make postings and communicate with each other both synchronously and asynchronously.

Blogs, like other media, cover all different topics, such as food, politics, or class activities. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Since its appearance in 1995, blogging has emerged as a popular means of communication, influencing public opinion and mass media around the world.

**How Do I Create a Blog?**

First go to the HSN at: [http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/](http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/)
1. Login at [http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/](http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/)
   - HCC Username /HCC password
2. Main Menu [ My Sites /Creat a Site]
3. Write the Site Name and Site Title
4. Click “Create Site”

This is an opinion of a faculty members that is using the HSN:

“During the Fall 2012 semester I, in collaboration with the EdTech personnel, put together a Blog in our Hostos Website Social network system. I went from never blogging before, hardly using Facebook and never “tweeting” to having my own blog, Healthy Hostos! Everything was a new language for me, a very exciting new language. The experience is very stimulating because very often I discover a new way or feature that allows me to create more interesting ways to share health education information among our students. The main purpose of the Healthy Hostos blog is to have an easily accessible place in which I can share information about health, food, nutrition, physical activity and weight management with our college community. Since my educational and professional background is Nutrition and Dietetics I’ve always been approached by people with questions about Nutrition and food. This blog opens a new venue for me to answer all those common questions that many of us have about health issues.” Iris Mercado, Assistant Professor and Coordinator, Health Education, CDN, Ed.D.

Please visit Healthy Hostos! A Blog for Hostos students, faculty and staff.

[http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/healthyhostos](http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/healthyhostos)

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**The Bronx EdTech Showcase 2013**

@Lehman Community College

**SAVE THE DATE**

Friday May 3, 2013

more details to come, go to the edtech website: [http://cuny.is/bronxedtech](http://cuny.is/bronxedtech)

“I went from never blogging before, hardly using Facebook and never “tweeting”, to having my own blog, “Healthy Hostos”!”
EdTech: Who We Are

We support the use of technology in the teaching and learning. We want to enhance faculty development, provide students with a high level of computer literacy, and foster online education. Through collaboration with Academic Computing, we hope to empower faculty, serve students, and create a supportive environment for all types of learners. And we work to make technology an integral part of the academic websites and develops all sorts of specialty applications.

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EdTech Faculty Workshops

The Education Technology Department invites you to participate in a series of workshops aimed to help you take full advantage of technology tools and strategies to enhance teaching and learning. These workshops are centered on experiences acquired through the use of different technologies in the classroom, and will demonstrate the pros and the cons when used in the educational setting.

All sessions will be held in the Faculty Commons (C-559) except some Smart Board Essentials workshops, which are posted on the online registration page. To find out exact times of the workshops, and to register, go to: http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/edtech/for-faculty/workshops/

Smart Classroom Essentials
Thursday 1/24/13, Monday 1/28/13, Tuesday 1/29/13, Wednesday 1/30/13, Thursday 1/31/13, Friday 2/1/13

Blackboard Essentials
Wednesday 2/13/13, Thursday 2/21/13, Tuesday 2/26/13, Thursday 3/7/13

Blackboard Grade Center
Thursday 2/14/13, Wednesday 2/20/13, Wednesday 2/27, 2013 Wednesday March 13, 2013 Thursday April 11, 2013

Web 2.0 Tools
Tuesday 3/12/13, Thursday 4/18/13

Assessment Tools
Wednesday 3/6/13, Wednesday 4/17/13

Working with ePortfolios
Tuesday 3/19/13, Wednesday 4/24/13

Blackboard Collaborate
Thursday 3/14/13, Wednesday 3/20/13

Hostos Social Network
Tuesday 4/9/13
Educational Technology Leadership Council

Kate Lyons
Chairperson, EdTech Leadership Council
clyons@hostos.cuny.edu

http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/edtech/etlc

ETLC Current Membership

<table>
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<th>Field</th>
<th>Members</th>
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| Allied Health       | Prof. Mary Manning
|                     | Prof. Petal Leu Wai See               |
| BSS                 | Prof. Felipe Pimentel
|                     | Prof. Amy Ramson                      |
| Business            | Prof. George Cheng                    |
| Counseling          | Mr. Fabian Wander                     |
| English             | Prof. Vermell Blanding                |
| Education           | Prof. Michael Gosset                  |
|                     | Prof. Sherese Mitchell                |
| Humanities          | Prof. Catherine Lewis                 |
| Language & Cognition| Prof. Norma Peña de Llorenz           |
|                     | Prof. Mildred Rabry                   |
| Library             | Prof. Kate Lyons                      |
| Mathematics         | Prof. Tanvir Prince                   |
| Natural Sciences    | Prof. Flor Henderson                  |

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