

Team(s)work Makes the Dream Work: Using MS Teams in an Agricultural Communications Block Course Structure

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Introduction/Need for Idea

COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the role of online communications.

Microsoft Teams is a platform used for collaboration, file sharing, chat threads, and video conferencing.

The Texas Tech University agricultural communications undergraduate program uses a “block” classroom structure: Magazine Production, Advanced Web Design, Campaigns, and Advanced Design.

Basecamp, another web-based project management program, has been used in the past. The program began using MS Teams with the new Creative Cloud integration and availability for students.

MS Teams began to support integration with Adobe Creative Cloud applications, which are utilized in the ACOM Block.

Results to Date/Implications

58.0% (n = 15) of students did not have previous exposure to MS Teams.

80.8% (n = 26) of students reported MS Teams helped keep them organized

73.1% (n = 19) of students used MS Teams to communicate with other students

96.2% (n = 25) said communication from the faculty through MS Teams was helpful

84.6% (n = 22) of students reported MS Teams was helpful for locating course documents

“It was good for my campaign group to store all our documents [in one place]. I liked that all the course documents were there too.”

“It was downloadable on my phone, so I stayed updated on everything and never missed a post or update.”

“I loved being able to collaborate with my team virtually this way. It was great to have it connect to OneDrive as well.”

“I did not like that we had to look on Blackboard and Teams to find assignments.”

How it Works

MS Teams offers the use of “channels” to separate projects and conversations, call and message board features, a calendar, file folders, assignment deadlines, automatic synchronization with Zoom and Outlook Calendar (Microsoft, 2021).

The 45 students enrolled in the ACOM Block for Spring 2021 were added to the “2021 ACOM Block” team within MS Teams.

Five class channels were created within the team: General, ACOM 4305, ACOM 4311, ACOM 4312, and ACOM 4410. Two private channels were created, Faculty Resources and Editorial Team, to restrict access for specific groups.

Assignment deadlines were posted to MS Teams, along with the rubrics, but were submitted to Blackboard.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

It is essential for the “Block” course structure to use the same file organization scheme for assignment files, rubrics, examples, etc.

Zoom was used instead of MS Teams’ online meeting platform as few students had used MS Teams’ video conferencing technology, but all had used Zoom to virtually meet.

If MS Teams improves its video conferencing tool, this would make utilization of the platform’s calendars and meeting organization more seamless.

Costs/Resources Needed

The MS Teams app was available to students for free through their university Microsoft 365 account.

All of the features of MS Teams can be accessed when students log in through their Microsoft 365 account.

With access to the internet, students can sync files and participate in virtual class activities, such as discussion boards.

This app is free to download on mobile devices.

References

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