X Marks the Spot: Designing for an Experiential Learning Journey

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Teaching and learning in a high enrollment lecture hall course can be challenging for instructors and their students. Scholars such as Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, have encouraged the adoption of student-centered and active learning concepts, but at the same time, the reliance on rote learning and assignments, such as lectures and scantron exams, that focus on lower-order objectives is not uncommon in large classroom settings. While these forms of assessment are functional and reliable, they do not create a memorable experience that students want to share with others.

This was the case for students in a gateway information technology course - one where they were asked to complete traditional assessments - exams and papers. These assignments were unfulfilling for the students to complete and for the instructor to grade. It was clear that a new path was needed to reach the final learning destination.

The first step was to plan out the itinerary for this trip, and to realize that there were many directions it could take. Instead of a paper experience, the design for this
adventure would be the creation of a data-driven digital infographic about an emerging technology for an external audience. Once the logistics were established and the students set off on their journey, they were given wayfinding tools (e.g., a syllabus, scaffolds) to help them navigate the terrain and complete the journey in a meaningful and reflective way. Students found that this trip was not without its challenges. Yet, the rewards and the connections they made along the way gave them confidence and pride that was missing in the more traditional forms of assessment.

This presentation will describe the ways in which a paper-based assignment in an IT survey course was transformed into an experiential learning journey, with the instructor serving as the tour guide.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr. Sharon Stoerger is the Assistant Dean for Instructional Support and Assessment for the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers. Previously Dr. Stoerger was director of the Information Technology and Informatics (ITI) program, assistant teaching professor, and co-founder of Women in Information Technology and Informatics at Rutgers. Her teaching experience ranges from gender and computerization (STEM) to instructional technologies to management in information organizations. Dr. Stoerger’s research areas of interest include computer-mediated communication, social informatics, and educational uses of social technologies including virtual worlds. She is also interested in online and blended teaching approaches. She has presented her work on educational uses of technology at a number of national and international conferences including EDUCAUSE, New Media Consortium, the eLearning Forum Asia, and Online EDUCA Berlin. She has also written several articles and book chapters on the educational uses of social media, virtual worlds, and other emerging technologies.