

Ben: Welcome to the UP TechTalk Podcast, coming to you from the Academic Multimedia Studio on the University of Portland campus. Produced by Academic Technology Services. Welcome to UP TechTalk. This is Ben Kahn. Today I'm joined by Maria Erb here from the University of Portland. Maria, how are you doing today?

Maria: Hey Ben.

Ben: Hey. Enjoying the weather?

Maria: Yeah, I like a little bit of a rain every now and then.

Ben: It's really has just morphed into late October weather here in Portland, and it's raining and cold, but we get to sit inside drinking tea and talking about technology, so I'm happy. It's just the 2 of us today. We're going to just be chatting with some tech news and what we've been up to. Anything going on with you Maria you want to talk about right away?

Maria: Well, I think we should talk about the conference that we just got back from.

Ben: Yeah, we'll definitely get to that. I guess just first a little bit of housekeeping UP tech news. I just wanted to highlight a couple of tools that we have that are new. First off, [inaudible 00:01:15] which is a tech tool that's been around for a really long time I think, but we just got it at the University of Portland, and it's going to be really helpful for bringing some of our ... Increasing the ability for online teaching to create conversations using media and to inject more of a sense of presence into online teaching. I think that's one to watch out for. The other one, just a personal favorite of mine, is that there's a new version of Camtasia that just came out.

Maria: Yes. I can't wait to upgrade.

Ben: It's really awesome. I jumped into it right away and really just starting playing around with it. It just feels super modern and fresh. Just an overall big improvement over what was already like my favorite tech tool that I use every day.

Maria: I'm upgrading this afternoon.

Ben: Okay, Maria will be upgrading, and anyone at UP, we have a site license for faculty and staff. If you just contact the help desk, let them know you want the new Camtasia. They'll get that installed on your work computer for you, and it's the same across PC and Mac, so it's very nice.

As Maria was saying, we're going to be talking about a conference that we went to last week over fall break. We can't have a quiet week. We have to go do a conference or something fun like that, so we went down to UG just a couple hours away, and we attended Northwest eLearn. This was my second time. Maria, how many have you been to?

Need Help? <mailto:support@rev.com>
Get this transcript in a non-tabular format

Maria: I've gone every year that I've worked here, so at least 3 if not 4 of the conferences. It's really one of my favorites because it's a conference that focuses on practice, and very few vendor sales pitch types of presentation, but it's really people in the field talking about what it's like and pulling from their best practices and sharing.

Ben: Yeah, absolutely. It's a great regional kind of thing, so I think everyone has sort of on the same level as far as we all relate to each other.

Maria: There's a good mix of large community college systems, small private universities and everything in between. I like that too.

Ben: Yeah definitely, and actually I was surprised. This was again, only my second time. Last year I don't think I realized quite how many faculty are attending. When I thought it was mostly tech people and instructional designers, but there's a lot of faculty and even administrators.

Maria: As a matter of fact, since I was on the conference committee, I do have access to that data that does show that most of the attendees are faculty members.

Ben: Yeah. I thought it was really cool that they were in that mix, participating in that conversation rather than just being like, "What do the ed tech people think we should do?" Yeah, I really enjoyed that. You as you mentioned were on the board or the committee, so thank you for your efforts in putting that together because I think it's really beneficial for everyone that went. I wanted to bring up a couple of the breakout sessions that I went to and just identify if there was some common themes there were present on those. The first one was called connecting with faculty strategies that worked. This was an instructional designer, an instructor at Lynfield College, and it was really just talking about ways to connect with faculty starting with that assumption that when you go and just start like, "Oh, here's a workshop on Doodle or Canvas or whatever happens to be and no one shows up." How do you get from there to this community of inquiry style with your faculty.

Maria: What were the rungs of the ladder.

Ben: The first thing that stuck out to me that she really talked about was personalization, so I think it gets back to knowing your audience and understanding what's important to them and involving them for sure. It's even thing as simple as using a mail merge instead of just sending out a mass email, so at least it has their name and maybe what they're working on or something like that. Letting them know that it's for their benefit, not just because you're trying to fill up a room to have numbers to show your boss, right?

Maria: Right.

Ben: I thought that was good, and there's a lot of good takeaways from that one. The other one that was really impressive was the folks from George Fox. Actually the provost and a couple of their librarians and professors talking about their digital fluency initiative

which I thought was really neat, and again, it's not that workshop approach. It's the ongoing raising the level of digital comfort I guess among the faculty.

Maria: I wonder how they got buy in at the top levels like that because it has to be a top-down initiative.

Ben: Yeah, that's so true, and that what was really impressive was to see their provost actually there presenting on it and saying. She's in direct talks with the president of that university, and actually she said the genesis of it was the president got invited down to Apple Headquarters in Cupertino. They invited, so Apple knows where to go to get to spark interest in spending effort and money on technology.

Their president went down for this retreat/event with a bunch of other university presidents, and then the provost said that ... At that time, her phone started blowing up with text messages like, "Hey, are we doing this? Have you heard about what these other people are doing? Do we know about this?" She's texting back, "Yes, we've been doing this for years. Yes, we know about this." That was the spark that got them started from that top-down level. I think that would work for our campus. Apple, if you're listening, please invite [crosstalk 00:06:56] one of our [inaudible 00:06:56] officials to the campus and wow them.

Maria: Honestly, that's what we need to happen. Well yeah I know it takes that spark at the top there to kind of pull everything together, and then there's a unified approach all the way.

Ben: The way they handle that was cool, but even then, they're still starting pretty small. It kind of reminded me of what we're doing with the technology ambassador programs where they're embedding people in some of the different disciplines across campus. Theirs is a little bit more involved than ours obviously. They have even people at different levels and they can progress through those levels at different years, so you might start as a participant, and then you become a coach or a mentor, and eventually you basically can become the tech guru for your department over time.

Maria: Nice, and for those tech gurus, do they get any sort of bonus or perk for doing that?

Ben: Yes, of course. That was another theme that I saw in a lot of these successful projects is that often there's a stipend involved. Even if it's not a huge amount, just something, or even like a reduction in credit load to correspond with that extra effort that goes on. That's something that I'd love to see more of at the university.

Maria: Absolutely, and that's been my experience with the efforts that I've been involved with that have worked. They all have that carrot kind of going on, and that does take the administration buy in for that to happen.

Ben: It does. A common theme also is like we'll do surveys and things like that, and they'll always say, "The data shows that teachers care most about real world results, better outcomes for their students, improvements for their teaching." In order to justify

getting the time to get there, they need some sort of ... They need to be able to justify their time investment basically as well. They're probably doing enough extra work outside of the classroom as it is.

Maria: Yeah, but that's a good point to remember is always bringing it back to putting in the time. This is what you can expect to get out of this tool or this approach or whatever, really making it clear and obvious to them.

Ben: Did you have any other takeaways from the Northwest eLearn you wanted to touch on?

Maria: Again, I just because I was working the conference rather than just as a participant, I maybe saw a different side of it, but I have been fortunate enough to be a participant in at least a few of them. Again, just love the sense of community there. The sessions are always good, so I think next year we'll plan to present.

Ben: If we can present on something again.

Maria: Yeah, yeah, we'll definitely do that.

Ben: Let's see. I wanted to move on quickly here. We are trying a segment today where we sent each other articles to read, and we're just going to do a brief mini book club style I guess on some readings that we did. I sent over one called The Unworkshop, and that was by again, I'm forgetting the name already, but it was Lee Skallerup Bessette. Good luck with that one. I just pulled out a quote, but the basic idea of this article was looking at the things that we tell instructors that we want them to do in their classes, and then the way that we give them instruction, and how those ideas are kind of dissonant. The quote I have says, "Traditionally, the workshop has been the primary vehicle for faculty development. Faculty come, listen to a facilitator, with nominal active learning interspersed, and leave with a few new ideas or strategies. But the format of the workshop often reproduces the kinds of teaching strategies we are seeking to avoid in our classroom practices: passive learning."

I thought that was real interesting and something I've kind of struggled with is how do we do workshops on things like active learning and flipped classrooms, but we don't expect them to watch something ahead of time or to be active participants in that learning. Just wondering if you had any hot takes on that.

Maria: Yeah. I again in the past when I've been involved in successful efforts, we've always run sort of a boot camp style workshop if you will, where faculty come in with materials and they leave with something done. In fact, that's always the allure for them is, "Oh my gosh. I can get this done in 2 hours, and I am going to have all the support I need around it. It's going to be a thing that's completed when I walk out the door and I don't have to deal with it anymore." That's a big lure for sure.

Ben: That's a great point, and that's something that I haven't really tried. Yeah, I [inaudible 00:11:50] see that. I actually was looking at one theory that was talking about 21st century learning design, like how to design activities to increase digital skills. One of the

big ones was innovation, but they were breaking down what does innovation actually mean, and they were contending that innovation does not count as innovation unless there's some sort of product that goes out to the real world for actual use, which I thought was an interesting way. I never thought about innovation that way before.

Maria: Well, I think that's a really narrow definition of it. Because we're putting the focus on the material outcome, and there could be lots of [crosstalk 00:12:33].

Ben: It could've been like a solution, an idea. It could be a video. It could be anything, it doesn't ... Just something that's out in the real world and has some sort of impact or at least is available to some sort of a real world audience is the idea. You can't innovate inside of a black box where you're not in connection with the outside world was the idea. All right, so Maria, do you want to look at the article that you had sent over?

Maria: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think staying right on top of the heartbeat of what we can expect in the near future as far as higher education goes is really important. Bryan Alexander posted on his website recent results of a public opinion poll on higher education, and this was ... The organization that did this I believe is called Public Agenda, so I lump them in together with The Pew Charitable Trusts and a bunch of other organizations like that that are always surveying American public. This one found that Americans are losing confidence in the necessity of a college education for success in the workforce, and most Americans feel that a 4 year degree is not necessary for success in the workforce anymore.

I think that that's got some pretty major implications going down the road. I think we're less likely to see public funding increase for our state universities, and I think we're less likely to see families taking on more debt to put their kids through college.

Ben: Yeah. You sent over sort of a supporting article that I think Bryan had pointed to as you were mentioned from the Public Agenda, on the Agenda, right? I got some mixed messages from this, honestly. I wasn't able to tell. Are people feeling that higher education isn't necessary to secure a good job, or are they just feeling like it's not helping them to secure a good job and they have basically no hope of getting a good job? Is that really the same effect?

Maria: I know. Perhaps the language that they're using isn't really reflective of that, because I think that's a really good point. When you look at what is considered to be a good job these days, it almost inevitably lands within the tech, healthcare or finance sectors, those 3. That eliminates probably the majority of why students are in college. For the most part, when we have how many students in our school of engineering, I don't know, total maybe, 400 out of the 4,000 students we have here?

Ben: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maria: Nursing is of course our biggest program and perhaps well, it should be.

Ben: More of a vocational style of education.

Maria: Yeah, but I feel that at least for our students, they probably aren't going to emerge with those feelings because of what they're studying when they're here and their chances of likely securing a living wage when they get out of college. I feel like maybe for our student population we're not going to kind of bump up against this, but I think a lot of other places are.

Ben: Yeah, absolutely. I think just so many people struggle with debt and justifying that investment that they're making. They're seeing that cost-benefit analysis that you do start to shift. Maybe they're thinking, "Well, maybe I can just make it on my own somehow, or maybe things are looking so bleak that I'm just not even going to take this gamble on myself. It's just not worth it," which is obviously very sad.

Maria: Well, I think it runs into what we started talking about in The Future of Learning which is what is the purpose of education, and maybe that shifted over time, and do people really believe that it's still a place for personal exploration, and growth, and this sheltered environment where you can really explore some things that you might not get a chance to when your day-to-day life revolves so much around staying competitive in the workforce. That ivory tower image I think doesn't exist for a lot of people anymore, and the cost of it is too high for a lot of people now.

Ben: Absolutely. Well, definitely something to be thinking about. I think I was looking at one little infographic the other day. I think it might've been in relation to analyzing Donald Trump's support base, and it was looking at the earning potentials for white males over time, and I was like, "I'm a white male. I will look at this." Just out of interest. I noticed they were tracking level of education, how that corresponded. People with 4 year degrees were nosediving the hardest. They were not on the overall level of income but in the percentage of their earning potential over time. It's gone down more than people without college degrees relative to the outcome that you can expect in terms of income. I noticed that the graduate school level was down a little bit but not nearly as much, so it's just ... Maybe that's the next frontier I guess in terms of pursuing higher education and expecting to remain competitive, but is that sustainable and healthy for people? I'm not sure.

Maria: When you take a look at maybe some professions that used to be a one-way ticket like a law degree for example, and now ... That would've been one that I think a lot of white males would have chosen, you know?

Ben: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maria: Now, you just got a lot of debt and not that much potential for a job in that field.

Ben: Absolutely. As more people are getting college degrees which was the turn of the last what, 40, 50 years. It's been shooting up and up. That's more competition for people to be hired at that level as well.

Maria: Definitely, and there's just fewer spots to put people anymore. Yeah, so definitely I think

we're seeing a lot of things that are changing at the same time.

Ben: Well I'll just say, if anyone's interested in this topic, make sure to come back on November 5th for our podcast with [inaudible 00:19:26] into some of these ideas about higher education might be feeling pressures to a degree that it actually does start to morph and have some different mechanisms that it works through. I think this key one was he said, "People need to be learning to learn."

Maria: Right, and our whole series The Future of Learning really touches on a lot of these issues which makes it just a really fascinating series.

Ben: Yeah, absolutely. We have a lot of fun doing that and putting that together. All right Maria, well it looks like we're almost out of time for today. Would you like to do an app pick of the week?

Maria: What's your app pick of the week and I'll think of what mine is.

Ben: We haven't done this for a little bit.

Maria: I know, we haven't.

Ben: I think the last time we were doing it I was like, "I think I've exhausted every app I've ever used." I couldn't think of any more, but since then, I've been having so many pop up in my day-to-day life. The one I want to talk about today is a fun one. My brother recently had his first child, so I was visiting with them, and I've never been a huge photography person. I'm not the person that's bringing a DSLR camera and shoving it in the baby's face and taking pictures, but smartphone cameras are at an interesting point I think to where they've gotten really good and are taking really high-quality photographs. I do have the fanciest new iPhone that has the top of the line camera, and the interesting thing about it is it never actually takes still photographs. It only takes burst photos essentially, so it captures about 2 seconds on either side of the actual photo that you take, meaning ... They call them live photos, so meaning every photo has the moment right, before and after you capture.

I ran across this app called Motion Stills which is from Google, and it lets you really easily grab those off of your iPhone and turn them into short videos or into GIFs. I was there visiting with my family and the baby, and not only did I have pictures of the moment where my dad is like, "Oh, I'm a grandfather for the first time," and he's holding this new kid, and he looks so happy, but then I have like a GIF of him looking at the camera with the sweetest smile I've ever seen my dad do. It was interesting. It really added an extra layer of ... I don't know. It just added something else special to that experience, so Motion Stills. If you have, I think iPhone 6S or above, check it out.

Maria: That is so nice Ben. Well I find myself turning to the OPB News app a lot, and I've got to say that I really like those apps that just give you those headlines and make it just so easy to ... I mean it messages me all the time when there's a new update in the trials, and the [ownership 00:22:24] trial or whatever it is.

Ben: The fun that we're having.

Maria: Yeah, the fun. Yeah, all of this kind of thing. I just think that's great. I've kind of been ...

Ben: Because you're not a cable TV person?

Maria: I don't have a TV.

Ben: And you don't drive and listen to the radio.

Maria: I don't have a car.

Ben: So you're pretty much cut off. How are you supposed to find and consume media?

Maria: Well, I like the fact that ... I've been opposed to push technology in the past, but I like the fact that it will subtly alert me to the latest things going on here in the state, and I think that's a good value add. I'm for that.

Ben: All right, Maria is staying informed with the OPB app, and that's national. No, that's just for ...

Maria: Yeah. I also have the NPR app as well, but I like the OPB. [crosstalk 00:23:16] It's just for Oregon.

Ben: You can get the local news also. Maria's staying informed with OPB.

Maria: Yes.

Ben: And me just making GIFs again. Okay, so that wraps up this episode of UP TechTalk. Thank you for listening. Remember, you can always continue the conversation with us by following us on Twitter @uptechtalk, and you can visit our blog at sites.up.edu/techtalk.

Thank you for joining us for another episode of the UP TechTalk Podcast. We post new episodes on Friday mornings. If you want to hear more, please subscribe through iTunes, or check out the TechTalk blog at techtalk.up.edu.