TOPcast Episode #69: Field Report #4: How Are We Doing? Hearing Everyone's Voices Through Data

Narrator: What will your future look like? The job you do today could be different than the jobs of tomorrow. Some see this as a challenge. At UCF, we see opportunity, a chance for you to grow your knowledge, and strengthen your skills from anywhere life might take you. With in-demand degree programs and resources for your success, UCF Online can help you prepare for the future and all the possibilities that come with it.

(musical transition)

Tom Cavanagh: From the University of Central Florida's Center for Distributed Learning, I'm Tom Cavanagh.

Kelvin Thompson: And I am Kelvin Thompson.

Tom: And you are listening to TOPcast: the Teaching Online Podcast.

Kelvin: I'm in the right place. Yay!

Tom: Yay!

Kelvin: That's always a question.

Tom: That's right. When you get on that airplane and say, "You know, we will be flying to Albuquerque today," and then you always have the—

Kelvin: *(silly voice)* Albuquerque!?

Tom: You get that comedian pilot who's like, "Wait a minute!" Yeah, that's hilarious.

Kelvin: Yeah, it is.

Tom: I don't mind the flight attendants being funny. If you ever fly Southwest, sometimes they're hilarious.

Kelvin: You don't look for humor in your pilots.

Tom: No, I want a serious pilot.

Kelvin: (*laughing*) A very serious pilot. That's right. That's right. I gotcha.

Tom: Cool. Well, Kelvin, it's nice to see you.

Kelvin: Mhmm. Nice to be seen. Nice to see you.

Tom: I saw—I caught an actual glimpse of you in the wild. Sort of like Bigfoot, from a distance. I saw—

Kelvin: What's that famous photo? Like, what's Bigfoot doing? Is he like—he looks like a zombie who's got his hands out in front of him? He's like (*zombie imitation)*.

Tom: Yeah, he's loping along.

Kelvin: Yeah, loping.

Tom: I had a Kelvin sighting.

Kelvin: (*laughing*) In the wild.

Tom: That's right, in the wild. So, I'm going to have to do some, you know, plaster casts of your footprints to prove that I saw you—that you were there.

Kelvin: Medium-foot!

Tom: Yeah, I will have some Zapruder footage of you. You know, kind of shaky camera walking down the hall. (*gasps*) It's Kelvin Thompson!

Kelvin: Do you know that we think that we've actually—I don't know about Bigfoot—but we think that we've cracked the code on Loch Ness Monster? You know, that's a thing.

Tom: Really?

Kelvin: You should Google that. We think we have scientific data [and] put a picture together of what the Loch Ness Monster actually is.

Tom: When I was a kid, I was really into the Loch Ness Monster. I tried to convince my parents when I was in third grade that me and my best friend should fly to Scotland by ourselves—

Kelvin: Sure! (*laughing*)

Tom: —and see the Loch Ness Monster.

Kelvin: By yourselves! (*laughing*)

Tom: Yeah, it made perfect sense to me at the time. I remember the dinner table conversation. My parents, and my dad's sort of amused look like, "Really? That's your plan?"

Kelvin: Yeah, not so much. Yeah. All right. Well, we bill this show as a collegial conversation about online blended digital teaching and learning conducted over a shared cup of coffee and by golly, we have a shared cup of coffee today, Tom.

Tom: By golly, I've got it!

Kelvin: That was a jump cut. (*laughing*) That was an abrupt transition.

Tom: Yeah, no, that's all right. I'm drinking a cup of coffee that was shared with me by none other than the fleetingly spotted Kelvin Thompson.

Kelvin: Out of the thermos. I was like, "Where did my thermos go?"

Tom: Yeah, you're looking for your thermos.

Kelvin: There's the thermos.

Tom: There it is.

Kelvin: That's right. Uh, loping along.

Tom: Now I'm taking a sip, and—

Kelvin: Is it pretty good?

Tom: I give it a thumbs up.

Kelvin: Yeah, I thought it was pretty good. So, you're probably wondering what this is that you're drinking.

Tom: Besides coffee? Yes, I'm wondering.

Kelvin: Yes, specifically, within the coffee family, what specifically it is. So, today's coffee is from Sparrows Coffee in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I've been to Grand Rapids once in January. I don't recommend it. But you know, I felt like I could do anything after a week in Grand Rapids in January. I was walking around in short sleeves. It was like 40°F. This poor Florida native was like, "Eh, it's nothing." So, this coffee is called "Come Together Coffee." It's part of a rather unique initiative in which individual coffee roasters from around the US are making a one-time unique batch of coffee with all of the profits going to a particular local charity. Trade Coffee—that coffee subscription service with the recommendation engine that we've talked about previously—works with a network of 50 such US roasters, and each week, another handful of these roasters announces their special batch of coffee. So, you won't be able to find any information on this particular coffee that we're drinking today because it's already gone. But in the show notes, we'll put some information about this "Come Together Coffee" initiative so that you can shop for an upcoming coffee and charity because it's a worthy cause. "Come Together Coffee." So, you know, how many times have each of us said recently something along the lines of, "We're all going to get through this together. We're all in this together. We're going to get through it together." Perhaps now more than ever, we need our unique perspectives and backgrounds to come together to holistically address a whole bunch of different issues, not just a pandemic, not just racism, but all kinds

of stuff. We're better together. And so, we need to come together to be better together. So, how is the coffee? I think you said it was okay. And how is the connection to today's episode topic, Tom?

Tom: I enjoyed the coffee, as I mentioned. I think it's good. And it's nice to be sharing it even though we're on opposite ends of the office from each other. And the connection? So, let me take shot at this. "Come Together" is one of my favorite Beatles songs.

Kelvin: Go ahead and sing a few notes for us.

Tom: If we want to keep our listeners, I won't do that.

Kelvin: (*laughing*) I was hoping.

Tom: But I'm assuming it has nothing to do with the Beatles. But kind of all getting through this together, coming together, I think I'm seeing a tenuous strand connecting that theme—

Kelvin: Grasp it, grasp it! (*chuckles*)

Tom: Which I happen to know what today's theme is about. So, we are going to talk about surveys and data and pulling together the collective voice of our various constituents to better understand what's going on out there and react to it, hopefully in positive ways. So, am I in the general vicinity?

Kelvin: Yeah. So, C+?

Tom: I'll take it. That's passing.

Kelvin: (*laughing*) No, I'm asking! I'm asking you!

Tom: (*laughing*) Oh, I thought you were giving me a C+!

Kelvin: No, I think you did a good job! I'm just saying—so you're saying that's like a C+ connection? Maybe, you know, kind of something up, no? B-?

Tom: No, yeah, I'll give you the B-.

Kelvin: All right. Okay. Well, that's—I've had worse. So yeah, that's exactly it. And as a reminder, for as long as this current reality of remote teaching lasts, we are continuing a monthly miniseries of field reports—ask Tom to do his Edward R. Murrow impersonation for you—field reports in our first Monday episodes in which we focus upon some unique aspect of this current circumstance. Meanwhile, on the third Monday episodes, we're going to keep on doing the guest interview spots because, hey, life goes on. And as a reminder in Episode #67, "Field Report #3: Carrying Out a 'More Online Every Semester' Strategy," we said toward the end, well-prepared faculty and intentionally designed online course sections result in arguably less tech support requests, more successful

students, better satisfied students, better satisfied faculty, so forth and so on. And this is where we pick up our fourth field report.

Tom: That's right. And we wanted to talk today about the use of data. And we like to consider ourselves a data informed organization, a data informed university. I know that we're not alone in that, and there have been a lot of pushes for data analytics and learning analytics and other kinds of things across the higher ed space, let alone, you know, healthcare or retail or whatever. But here we happen to have a pretty awesome colleague, Dr. Patsy Moskal, who leads our Digital Learning Impact Evaluation and is responsible for helping us structure many of our evaluations and surveys. And she has led some of the recent surveying at UCF of students and faculty as a result of this remote migration. She did a kind of just-in-time sort of pop-up-survey in March—kind of end of March, beginning of April, if I'm not mistaken. We were pretty early into it—just to see a quick pulse check for students, how things were going. We've alluded to that one in the in previous field reports, I think.

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: And then we had a separate student and faculty survey at the end of the spring semester, and we've compiled the data for that. And then we've also got other kind of regular data points such as end of course evaluations, end of course grades, other kinds of things that the university always looks at, and we're trying to see what the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been on those kinds of measures. And it's been really interesting going through those various data sources. And maybe before we start talking about the specifics at UCF—maybe you can indulge me—I want to make a comment on some national data that I've seen recently.

Kelvin: That's good for broad contextualization.

Tom: Yeah, and it's really in addressing a particular comment that I've heard both in the national media and then just sort of from other individuals around campus. And that is that…well, it's clear now that students don't like online learning.

Kelvin: (*laughing*) Is it? Is it clear now?

Tom: Yes. I have heard this said, and I'm not quite sure I accept that premise. But they are extrapolating from some surveys that have come out, right? And in those surveys, there is a population of students who weren't happy with this. I know that there are petitions to some fairly selective, elite Ivy League schools to get their money back or, you know, not Ivies, but whenever they call Ivy-adjacent kinds of schools to get their money back. I think there's a lawsuit—University of Chicago, for example—to get their money back. So, there's a there is a level of dissatisfaction. There was an Ernst & Young/Parthenon Group survey that was conducted in late April. One of the stats that came out of it, one of the kind of overarching themes, was that about 25% of the students were dissatisfied with remote learning. And that was across all sectors. Community college to research university to Ivy League. And okay. 25% is more than you want dissatisfied, right? Well, there's another survey that was done by Bay View Analytics. Jeff

Seaman and company, Cengage was the underwriter, but it was sponsored by five different organizations such as OLC and WCET and Every Learner Everywhere.

Kelvin: I remember hearing about this.

Tom: Yeah. And there was a Canadian one as well. They were surveying institutions' administrators more than they were, like, students directly like the Parthenon Group survey did, but one of the things that came out of that Bay View Analytics survey was that 97%—I think that's the number that I recall—97% of institutions said that they had faculty who were teaching some remote courses who had no previous experience teaching online.

Kelvin: Hm.

Tom: So, I contend that 25% actually isn't that bad—

Kelvin: That's right.

Tom: —of dissatisfied for two reasons. One is, obviously, these faculty weren't prepared. And it's no criticism of these faculty. We took them and they didn't know how to swim and we throw them into pool and said, "Swim," and they did the best they could. But a quickly improvised synchronous Zoom class does not a quality online course make. And we know we're preaching to the choir here.

Kelvin: Right.

Tom: So, the quality of these courses probably wasn't great, which is I think why University of Chicago and University of Pennsylvania and others are having students complain. But the other piece—and I think the piece that I just haven't heard talked about—is that the students who were forced to go into a remote environment are students that had specifically chosen to take face to face classes.

Kelvin: Right.

Tom: They didn't want online.

Kelvin: Right.

Tom: For whatever reason: they didn't like it, they don't think they're a good learner in online, they don't have the discipline, whatever. But they had chosen to be face to face students and then they got shoved into something that they didn't want, that they didn't choose. Even if it was awesome, they probably wouldn't have liked it. So, I think combining putting somebody into something that they didn't like with the fact that it probably wasn't that great of quality to begin with, I mean, no wonder that you have a 25% dissatisfaction rate. And to the point of this podcast, we're trying to use data to improve every semester and improve in the areas where we can. So, with that as a setup—and thank you for letting me get on that soapbox because it's something I have been thinking about for a while, and I just haven't heard anybody talking about that. All I've been hearing

is that, “Oh, students don’t like it.” Well, those students don’t. They didn’t like it to begin with!

Kelvin: Yeah, you know, it reminds me—without going down this rabbit trail too far—but it reminds me of when we continue to talk about nontraditional students vs. traditional students. Traditional students might as well be Bigfoot, right? There’s not that many of them, right? The majority of students in higher education are nontraditional students as a label. So, you know, it’s sort of these, “Well, you know students…” Yeah, well, which students, right?

Tom: Yeah. And unfortunately, policymakers, in their mind, a student is only what their experience of college was, which is—nine times out of ten—a traditional four-year, come out of high school, go to college sort of experienced residential. I tend to use the phrase “traditional students with nontraditional requirements.”

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: Or “nontraditional needs.” Something like that. So, you may be an 18-year-old student, but you got to work.

Kelvin: Yeah, that’s right.

Tom: You know?

Kelvin: Yeah, not some romanticized picture. So as a reminder, we are, in this episode, going to try to assemble a picture out of some data—think of it as paint by numbers if you want—so that we can see how we’re doing through remote instruction here at UCF. And in so doing, we’re hoping that maybe this will be a little bit of inspiration for you, dear listeners, about how you can put your own pictures together at your own institutions. And another little note here, we’re looking back a lot in this episode about Spring 2020 data because data lag, right? And summaries are faster than analyses and data cleaning and all that stuff. So, we’re in Summer 2020 as we record this, and we’ll be collecting new data, but we don’t…we won’t have a picture of Summer 2020 until after the term is concluded. So, a lot of this is going to be looking back at Spring 2020. So, big picture: we have some tech support data, we have some faculty surveys, student survey data, end of term normal evaluation, and grades. And then we’ll talk about looking ahead to Fall 2020. We’ll do all of that in about five minutes.

Tom: Go!

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: You want to start with tech support?

Kelvin: Sure. So just as a little bit of a contextualization, right? We don’t have good data on, “Well, what about the really online courses? Do you really see less tech support for those than remote instruction?” We don’t have data that are that fine grain, but we certainly have data that show us how term to term—Spring 2019 versus Spring 2020—how things looked. And our digital learning technical

support team—which mainly focuses on the learning management system but also is responsible for fielding other tech support such as, you know, Zoom—saw a marked increase in support tickets between those two terms, Spring 2019 and Spring 2020. On almost the same day, between those two years, we received in 2019, 134 help requests, but in 2020, 378 tickets. And here's another factoid. This is interesting. In Spring 2019, the biggest per-day number of help requests came on the last day of classes for the term, right as finals were about to start. And in 2019, on that day, there were 204 help tickets submitted. In Spring 2020, the last day of classes saw 327 help requests. But that was not the highest volume help ticket supported day in Spring 2020. That was the first day that we went to remote instruction. That was our highest volume for the entire Spring 2020 term, and that was the 378 tickets on March 18th that we received. So that's just an interesting comparison.

Tom: No surprise, I guess, on that March 18th day.

Kelvin: Yeah, that's right. You want to talk for a little bit? You want to frame up some of the faculty versus student survey stuff?

Tom: Sure. So, we did run concurrent but separate faculty and student surveys at the end of the spring term. And overall, the faculty, I think, perceived that they adapted fairly well to the migration to remote instruction. So, 82% said that they adapted extremely well to moderately well, and 0% reported extreme difficulty, which shocks me. We didn't get one. I don't remember what the response rate was of that survey, but typically, if somebody wasn't happy, we hear from them. So, that was a little encouraging. Now, I think it's interesting. I may jump ahead here a little bit. But in the student survey, we asked students, "How well did you adjust to the migration?" and "How well do you think faculty adjusted?" So, the students sort of had a two-part, kind of similar question to what we asked faculty. And so, 82% of faculty felt like they adjusted moderately to extremely well. 65% of students answered that question for themselves the same way, moderately to extremely well, but I think that they had the same perception, a similar number for faculty. So, their perception of faculty adjusting was lower than faculty's own perception of themselves adjusting. So, about a third felt like they had some difficulty, and they felt like about a third of faculty had some difficulty. So, I don't know if that's an equivalent number to the dissatisfaction number that I cited. I don't want to conflate those from the Parthenon study. This is "Did you have difficulty?" And this could be from anything, like, "I didn't have a webcam" to "I didn't understand how to use Zoom" to "My work schedule changed, and I could no longer easily, you know, get online at the time I needed to." It was…We didn't specify the details. We did have some follow-on questions about, you know, what it was, and there was some themes, but that number, that percentage between the faculty and the students could be interpreted by them in any number of different ways.

Kelvin: Yeah, so just to kind of boil that down. The way I think of that is students are just a little bit more critical, right? They are the ones who were most affected, right? And faculty looking at students, 94% of the faculty said that students adapted extremely to moderately well, but students speaking about themselves, 65% said extremely to moderately well. Students looking at faculty, 67% of the faculty

adapted extremely to moderately well, but the faculty thought of themselves, 82% of us. So, it's just, students are a little bit more critical, and that's kind of understandable I think, and/or faculty are just being a little bit patient and generous about the whole thing. So, there's a lot of ways that you can kind of make sense of these data. You can try to interpret them, but it's interesting.

Tom: I think what we heard, especially in this area, where we have a lot of hospitality industry, whether it's restaurants or hotels or others, and those employees suffered particularly hard during this pandemic. And we know that a lot of our students just lost work, were furloughed, were fired, and it impacted them in ways that maybe didn't get communicated to faculty. Maybe the faculty just didn't know, but the students shared that through the survey by saying, "Yeah, this was really hard because I lost my job and I didn't know how I was going to make rent, and yet I still have my paper due on Thursday" or whatever. The faculty may not have been as aware of those things if the community—if the student—didn't communicate it to them.

Kelvin: Yeah, which I think is worth mentioning in the faculty surveys. Faculty identified what they considered top challenges to moving remote, and the most prevalent top challenge was student challenges and stress. That's what the faculty said. 42% of faculty responded and said, "Students had challenges and/or stress." So, there was a recognition, I think, broadly, that this is hard on students. And then the second one—back to your broader survey comments—faculty said that another big challenge for making this remote instruction thing happen is that students have a personal preference for face to face. 38% of faculty said that. And then 37% said ensuring academic integrity.

Tom: Yeah, I'm aware of both of those—

Kelvin: Yeah. (*laughing*)

Tom: From the anecdotal conversations I have had with faculty and deans and associate deans over the last two months. Yeah, I'm not surprised to hear that, especially the academic integrity one. That was…Especially for the faculty who did not have experience teaching online, had never designed an assessment for online delivery before, it was a big concern for them. They just couldn't really conceptualize—in the week we gave them—a different assessment strategy besides just closed book tests in a classroom. And I'm not exactly sure it's fair to ask them to because their assessment strategies were already set up. And the semester was already more than half over by the time we did that. So, yeah, that was a big one. And then, you know, the faculty perceived 38% of students, you know, prefer face to face. Maybe! You know, maybe that's the third of students, approximately that struggled with this, and we know from our own numbers of, like, student credit hours or sections or whatever, and how they fill. You know that's about the number of fully face to face credit hours we do in a year. I think it's something like 37%. Something like that.

Kelvin: Yeah. I probably would not parse it to exactly, right? Because it's just that the faculty respondents, 38% of those faculty said, "Students personal preference for

face to face is a challenge." I don't know if that directly equates to 38% of students. But nevertheless, it's a thing.

Tom: Yeah. And I mean, I just think it's interesting. And I agree, I wouldn't correlate those directly or anything, but we do know that there are a certain percentage of students—back sort of what I said at the top—who just want to be face to face.

Kelvin: And that's okay.

Tom: And that's okay.

Kelvin: Any other semester.

Tom: I mean, it's not my job to tell them that they can't be, right? And sometimes I feel like when I talk to faculty that—certain faculty—that they're accusing me of making them.

Kelvin: Yeah, right.

Tom: Well, any other semester? No, I would never force somebody to go online. It's not my job. It's my job to support everybody who wants to go online. But this semester, like you said, nobody had a choice.

Kelvin: No, exactly. Yeah. That being said, I'm fascinated by this. It was kind of a write-in, like, you know, you could write in your own thing, but faculty: biggest positive surprises, and I love this. First thing, you know, these are kind of in order. I don't have exact percentages, but these are in decreasing order of prevalence as Patsy's graduate students kind of worked with her to compile and summarize: the technology worked was the biggest surprise. And I think that's awesome, you know?

Tom: Yeah. Well, kudos to our IT team that did a lot of things that I don't think people knew.

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: I mean, like, they goosed the network ring bandwidth by like tenfold, and nobody knows that.

Kelvin: No.

Tom: They procured an enterprise license of Zoom where we didn't really have one. We had spotty licenses around campus, but they combined those licenses and got it to everybody within a couple of days over a weekend. It was like on a Sunday that thing got signed. I mean, there is just a whole bunch of things that they did that I want to give them a bunch of credit for.

Kelvin: No, I agree. There's some more pedagogical things, right? Faculty said that they were surprised that interaction increased, and that students were resilient. Student

work quality increased. Now, some of these things you can interpret different ways, right? Like, there's differential narratives that can take place with the, like, student work quality increased. Well, academic misconduct. You know, you could go there if you wanted to.

Tom: Or "I dropped three assignments. That's why it went up. It was not nearly as rigorous." And it depends on who you're talking to what narrative you're going to get from that. But I think, by and large, the faculty were enormously understanding of the students. I mean, we saw example after example of the faculty kind of going above and beyond to try to reach out to students and help and be understanding and provide alternative sorts of things for them to do if for some reason they couldn't, because we knew that there were legitimate equipment issues, like they didn't have webcams because they were left in their dorm rooms when they had to evacuate during spring break and they couldn't get back to get them. There were just all kinds of issues that happened, and the faculty, by and large, did a really good job, I think, just trying to meet their students where they were.

Kelvin: Yeah. Do you want to jump for a second down to the end of term Student Perception of Instruction?

Tom: Yeah.

Kelvin: Because I think there is another counterintuitive takeaway there.

Tom: What was interesting when we looked at the Student Perception of Instruction (that's our end of course evaluation), it was fascinating that when we compared Spring 2020 to Spring 2019, it all went up with one exception when we looked at it by modality. So, we had different modality courses, right? We have fully online, we have blended, we have some video, and we have face to face, and we didn't recode our modalities when we moved to a remote instruction, so we were able to still look at the face to face courses that went remote at the end of the semester. And they actually went up in the student end of course evaluations. The average, you know, number, the numerical score for each of these courses. The only one that went down was actually the lecture capture course, which shouldn't have changed, right? Because that was already a distance modality. Now, I will say that we don't have as many of those as we once did. So, the *n* may be a little smaller on that. So, a little movement here or there might have inordinately impacted that percentage. But the lecture capture modality was the only one that went down. Everything else went up, which was gratifying. And I think what that says—

Kelvin: And surprising.

Tom: A little surprising. Actually, you're right. I didn't expect that, but I think it says that the students recognized that the faculty were doing the best that they possibly could.

Kelvin: I think so.

Tom: And the students kind of gave them a break, I think.

Kelvin: I think so. I think we saw a lot of, I mean, back to those other survey results, right, I think faculty recognized what students were going through and I think students recognized some of what faculty were going through, and in a rare moment of beauty, there was grace extended by both parties to the other. Isn't that nice?

Tom: Yeah. And at the risk of kind of tooting our own horn a little bit, the fact that online learning is so deeply integrated into what we do at UCF—maybe not in every single department at the same level as other departments—but it's pretty ubiquitous here, and we had deep support and we've got a large staff and we've talked about that. And we talked about the numbers that you've run previously about the percentage of faculty who have been through some form of training.

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: It was high.

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: So, when 97% of schools say that they had some faculty who were teaching that didn't ever have any online experience…Yeah, we're probably included in that because we probably had some faculty that didn't really, but it was a small percentage of faculty that hadn't done anything that migrated over. So, I would say that translated maybe into a higher quality experience for these students than maybe they expected.

Kelvin: Yeah, I think that's right. And not to make too much of this, but I think some other stuff out of that Student Perception of Instruction, the pattern that you described holds when you look at the data in different ways, like academic level of the courses or academic standing of the students and by discipline, where discipline equals the individual college in which they're based, except for like three colleges, like our Honors College, our College of Graduate Studies, and Optics. And in those cases, Spring 2020 was slightly lower than Spring 2019.

Tom: And I would say those are three colleges where we don't do a ton of online learning.

Kelvin: Exactly.

Tom: You know, Optics, hardly anything, and Honors? Yeah, nothing really.

Kelvin: Right, exactly.

Tom: So, yeah, that's interesting.

Kelvin: And then meanwhile, if you look by modality, as we know, and for our listeners, the course modalities where we and our central operations have a lot of influence

in supporting the intentional design of blended courses, fully online courses, in both Spring 2019 and Spring 2020, those modality courses are a little bit higher in terms of the end of term evaluations than say the alternative, like, face to face courses. And I think, again, that speaks to intentionality and so forth. You want to comment about grades?

Tom: Yeah, maybe this will be sort of the last data that we really dig into, but just a passing comment maybe more than anything else. At the end of the Spring semester, like a lot of institutions, we implemented the choice for students to go pass/fail on an individual course basis, what we call S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory), if they wanted to. And I think as a result of that, we saw more passing grades from Spring '19, where it was 89.4% passing to Spring of '20, which was 91.3%. So, it was basically one-point higher passing percentage of Spring '20 vs. Spring '19. I think that the S/U option maybe had something to do with that. Maybe we're just getting smarter students and teaching them better. But given everything that happened and all the disruption, I think that the S/U is more likely. The GPA went up too, as did the percentage—by a small degree—the percentage of students who came off of academic probation. And there was a very large decrease in the number of students who went on academic probation. Like, 55% fewer students went on to academic probation than the previous spring. And I think that's a direct result of the pass/fail, S/U option. So, students could do that on a course by course basis and choose a U for example, if it's a course that they were not going to pass, if they were not going to earn a C or better in. That was our criteria, or maybe a C-. I think it was a C actually. And if they chose a U, it would not negatively impact their GPA and it would not negatively impact their standing regarding academic probation, because that's based on GPA. So as a result, I think we had more students who just basically got amnesty in the spring as a one term sort of anomaly than we might ordinarily see.

Kelvin: Great, so lots of data, lots of voices represented. And we've already been sharing these data internally to try to inform what we're doing in our central support resources like with our instructional designers as we carry out kind of innovative faculty preparation. But we've got a lot in the frying pan as we get ready for Fall 2020 as we try to make that term as safe and effective as possible, so we hope to be able to provide an update on those efforts informed by these data when the time is right.

Tom: Indeed, and it seems to change on daily basis. (*laughing*)

Kelvin: (*laughing*) You gotta take the longer view.

Tom: Yeah.

Kelvin: You want to try to bottom line it for us?

Tom: We often refer to our institutions as communities, and in a community, we need to listen to everyone's voice so that we consider as many different perspectives as possible as we make decisions and move forward. As we move forward with remote instruction and as online education professionals, we will learn from our

faculty and our students and ensure that teaching and learning are as effective as they can possibly be.

Kelvin: I hope so.

Tom: Yes. All right. So, Kelvin, you were going to share something maybe a little bit different with our listening audience as we wrap up this episode.

Kelvin: I think we can indulge everybody's patience for just another moment.

Tom: Just another moment. This will be worth it, folks. Trust me.

Kelvin: Well, I don't know. So in in Episode 68, we joked briefly about our TOPcast Insiders receiving a decoder ring, which is a pop culture reference. This inspired us—or at least it inspired me—to go off the rails a little bit to have some fun with occasional secret messages for Insiders in our episodes. So, we have since shared a decoder with our TOPcast Insiders. And as a reminder, you, dear listener, can become a TOPcast Insider by signing up for free at http://bit.ly/topcastinsider Lowercase, no spaces. bit.ly/topcastinsider. So now, Insiders, grab your decoders because today's secret message is a series of letters, which I will read using a phonetic or spelling alphabet where words stand for letters. You write down the letters. Here they are: Denver, King, Zero, New York—that's one word—Adams, Zero, King, Boston, Victor, Victor, X-ray—another one word—George, Easy, King, Boston, Zero, King, Union, Roger. Plug that into your decoder and find the secret message. If you become a TOPcast Insider, you too can decipher these future secret messages.

Tom: Be sure to drink your Ovaltine. (*laughter*)

Kelvin: (*laughter*) Google that. You'll appreciate it.

Tom: All right. Well, this is—if you love it or if you hate it, it's all Kelvin.

Kelvin: (*more laughter*)

Tom: Get your decoders. That—yeah, Little Orphan Annie decoder rings.

Kelvin: Uh-huh.

Tom: Awesome. So, I have nothing to add to that.

Kelvin: (*even more laughter)*

Tom: You'll get the secret message if you become an Insider. You'll appreciate it, I think. Until next time for TOPcast, I'm Tom.

Kelvin: I'm Kelvin.

Tom: See ya!