TOPcast Episode #123: Hybridity Predicted and More from CHLOE 7

Tom: Hi, TOPcast listeners. Before we start, we want to tell you about an upcoming episode that we're planning. We would like to collect some of your thoughts about how to make sense of 2022 and prepare for 2023 in our field. These can be in the form of aspirations, predictions, reflections, or even just observations. We would love it if you would organize your thoughts in writing, and then record them in your very own voice. Thirty seconds or less would be awesome. Our first Monday episode for December 2022, will feature some of these insights in your voices along with our reactions. More details are in the show notes, but if you're interested, please contact us via email at topcast@ucf.edu. That's topcast@ucf.edu. Now, here's the show.

(*Music*)

Narrator: When you realize what your future can be, you want to do it right. UCF Online offers more than a hundred fully online programs, plus personalized support from success coaches, so you can get to the future that's right for you.

(*Musical transition*)

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

Tom: And I am Tom Cavanagh.

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

Tom: Hey, Kelvin. You kind of went into your NPR voice there for a second.

Kelvin: [Laughter] I know. I was like, which way is this going? Is it going to be exciting or is it going to be, let's relax. Let's think deep thoughts.

Tom: Welcome to Fresh Air.

Kelvin: That's right, Terry Gross.

Tom: Terry Gross, yeah.

Kelvin: That's right. She's a great interviewer.

Tom: She is.

Kelvin: I used to listen to her do those interviews a lot, and you know how you go through phases. I just don't have her queued up, but she is wonderful, and then I heard

Marc Maron interview her once and it was great. It was like, “Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I get to interview you.”

Tom: Well, you know, she does what we aspire to do, which is sort of make the interviews very conversational and not, “Okay, here's question one, here's question two. I have these agenda talking points I have to get to…” No, it's just sort of, “Hey, you're an interesting person, and you have interesting things to say, so let's have a conversation.”

Kelvin: That's right, that's right. I'm going to hazard a guess that she probably does it better.

Tom: [Laughter] Yeah, I think that's a safe bet, but you know what she doesn't have that we do?

Kelvin: What is that, Tom?

Tom: That is coffee.

Kelvin: Oh.

Tom: Yeah, so what coffee do we have today? What's in the thermos, Dr. Thompson?

Kelvin: Well, today's coffee, Dr. Cavanagh, is a single-origin Java, as in from Indonesia, Java, from Equator Coffees in the Bay Area of California. Now, I've had coffees from Equator before, and I don't really remember, but possibly you have, too. But I didn't really know the story behind their name. “Equator” was originally chosen to draw attention to the equatorial regions where coffee tends to thrive.

But the team now says that the symbolism of the global equator has come to represent, "The path around the planet that connects us all." The path around the planet that connects us all. Equator Coffees. This is, I thought, a really, really nice cup of coffee, this Java, and then I thought that the idea of connecting us all might be an appropriate theme, touchpoint, for today's topic. So, what do you think of the coffee? What do you think of my attempt at a connection?

Tom: I do like the coffee as well. It's very good, and I get the connection. Yeah, it is connecting. It's a connecting connection. [Laughter]

Kelvin: Yes. [Laughter]

Tom: How very meta of you.

Kelvin: A connecting connection. Yes, which is a whole lot better than the disconnected connections that I sometimes come up with at the beginning of the show. [Laughter]

Tom: Hey, look, they can't all be home runs. Sometimes a solid single is all you need.

Kelvin: Sometimes, the batter gets hit with the pitch. [Laughter]

Tom: Sometimes you got to cart him off the field. It's all right. It's all in the game. At least you're up at bat.

Kelvin: I guess, I guess. You want to tell our listeners what broadly we're going to talk about today?

Tom: Yes, we are talking about the broad connection that is the CHLOE 7 Report, which has just recently been released, and CHLOE 7, the title for this one this year is "Tracking Online Learning from Mainstream Acceptance to Universal Adoption." If you may recall, we've talked about CHLOE in the past. We talked about CHLOE 6, last year back in Episode 93, a more generalized perspective, reflections on the CHLOE 6 Report, and I guess we should probably give a reminder on what CHLOE is. It's an ongoing series of reports that solicit feedback from chief online learning officers, but it's also an acronym. It's the Changing Landscape of Online Education, C-H-L-O-E, CHLOE. That's been going on what, since 2017?

Kelvin: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Tom: Yeah, that's what we're going to talk about today, so that's our connection with the world.

Kelvin: That's right, or at least our little part of it.

Tom: That's right, yeah.

Kelvin: Yeah. I always like the CHLOE Reports, and I know we've talked about this off mic before that it is an interesting thing. I guess maybe the CHLOE series is maybe not unique in this aspect, but it is interesting because we can make a lot of these reports, and I think we should. I think they should be talked about. But they are moment-in-time sort of, I don't know, they're wet-finger-in-the-wind kind of polling of people, and then making sense of that, and then trying to look back and look forward at the same time. That's challenging.

Tom: Yeah, it is definitely a snapshot of a moment in time, as you say, and this one happens to be in 2021 in the midst of what is still a pandemic response in many places. In that regard, you can caveat it, I guess, with some of the results, but even so, I do think this one even more so than the 2020 one, which was even more skewed, is indicative of trends. It might be more useful and less easily dismissed as, well, that's just remote instruction or something like that.

Kelvin: Yeah, yeah. I think that's right. I don't know if you will completely agree with this, but I was thinking trying to compare this one with last year's, which I don't always do, but I did this time, I was thinking that last year's was more focused on, as you say, there was this ubiquitous experience of remote instruction, and then the beginnings of post-remote instruction, but still pandemic response. This report, I'm just going to say, feels a little different to me in its scope and its tone, apart from the insights. Does that resonate with you?

Tom: Yeah, it does. Others have written this, but I think it's true, that the big thematic takeaway from CHLOE 7 is hybridity. It's that what we're looking at is maybe less okay, everybody's going to be online in the future to well, it's going to be a combination of online and face to face as we move forward. Some of the practices and affordances that many faculty were exposed to for the first time through the pandemic may not get completely abandoned when they go back into the classroom. You're going to see this mixture of students taking different modalities and faculty teaching different modalities, whether it's fully online or it's blended, or it's face to face. It's going to be much more nuanced than you're either online or you're face to face.

Kelvin: Yeah, I think that's right, and I don't know, I think this report feels a little bit more, I don't know if this is quite the right word, a little bit more holistic than CHLOE 6. CHLOE 6, in retrospect, felt a little bit like, [Musically] “Dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee. [Announcer voice] Late breaking news from the front lines.”

Kelvin: It felt a little bit like that, and here let's just take as much as we can, make sense of this big idea, this thing, and we need to unpack it because people are desperate for insights, and this one felt a little bit more thoughtful. Let's take a broader view here, and yes, I tend to agree with what you summarized and that others have said about I think the big takeaway is hybridity. Do you want to go down a few other big themes that have come out of this?

Tom: Let me maybe just illustrate this hybridity because there is one chart in CHLOE that I think really illustrates this. If you're following along in your hymnals at home, it's page 10, table one. If you look at the hybrid row of this chart, in 2019 versus what people think will happen in 2025, these are chief online learning officer forecasts, versus what actually happened via IPEDS, the percentage of traditional age undergraduates that would be hybrid was 20% in 2019 to what they think will be 94% in 2025. For adult undergraduates, 25% to 90%, and graduate students 10% to 82%. There's a real sense that we're going to have a hybrid university in the future even more than we have today.

Kelvin: Yeah. I'm going to tell you that's what stood out to me throughout, and I think that's a very good concrete example. I think too, just the results of this, if I remember it correctly, I unlike you, did not come to class prepared with my little printouts here to reference. I'm kind of going off memory here.

Tom: You wrote the notes.

Kelvin: [Laughter] That's right. Well, there's that. But what did I base those on, Tom? Just coffee. Just coffee. What I seem to recall is there being, I don't remember if it's from that same table or not, but there was a relatively low percentage predicted in that, is it 2025, predicted for exclusively online or exclusively in person. That just to me further gave contrast to underscore your point.

Tom: You're absolutely right, yeah. I mean, I didn't read all those numbers, but it's striking.

Kelvin: Yes.

Tom: Those big percentages in hybrid are pulling from those other two categories.

Kelvin: Exactly.

Tom: It's single digits in traditional age undergrads for campus only, little or no online, or online, little or no campus, those are just both below 5%. The adult undergraduates, campus, little or no online, or online, little or no campus, are both under 10%, and in the case of the campus, it's only 1%.

Kelvin: Am I alone in this? It just is like, wait, what?

Tom: Yeah, I know. Well, and then graduate students, little or no online, campus only, 1% is what's predicted and then online is up to 17%. Yeah, that's a really good observation, so when it says it's becoming hybrid, it's at the expense of both face to face and fully online.

Kelvin: Yes. Now, caveat, asterisk all over the place, right? I mean, is that reality? That's a prediction.

Tom: Yeah, it's definitely something to watch.

Kelvin: Yeah, but I am fascinated. Now, not to veer too much into the provincial here at our university context, but maybe just as a point of illustration, and we've talked about this before, but I would say at UCF, if that is at all reflective of reality and what's going to happen, we're pretty well poised here because this is our wheelhouse, right? We have a real big historical investment in courses in a variety of digital learning modalities that students can choose to take fully online courses, blended, reduced seat time courses, in person courses, web-enhanced courses, whatever they want, and we have our exclusively online, UCF Online we call it, program. I think this is something that we've been dealing with, but that's not everybody's context.

Tom: No, and in fact, it's so funny that we're talking about this today because I was just talking about this in an email thread yesterday, and I shared an article that was written in 2010 by Marc Parry at the Chronicle of Higher Education, and Marc had come down here and interviewed a bunch of people. The whole premise of the article, I think it's entitled “Tomorrow's College…“

Kelvin: Oh, I remember this.

Tom: Yeah, and maybe we'll link to it in the show notes, because I found the link yesterday and shared it in this email thread.

Kelvin: Good. [Laughter]

Tom: It basically talks about that, how on campus students are taking online and blended options as a way to better engage with on-campus activities, so whether you're in Greek life or student government, or you're an intercollegiate athlete, or something, you're able to take online courses to give yourself more flexibility to do stuff on campus. This hybridity is something that I felt, at least Marc Parry felt, that we were leading on in 2010. When you look at this CHLOE Report, it seems like maybe this is becoming a lot more widespread.

Kelvin: You know, again, I don't want to put too much into all of this, but it does make one pause for a second and take a breath. I know plenty of institutions where whenever you say “online” you're talking about like a UCF Online kind of a thing. You're exclusively online, and a lot of intense marketing, and student support services.

Tom: Yeah. Well, and there might be like a for profit paradigm in your head when you think of that.

Kelvin: Yeah. That's right. This, if it's at all based in reality, I mean, would you go this far with me? It sort of flies in the face of that a little bit? How do you make sense of that in the market?

Tom: Well, I think it does, and again, we'll see maybe long-term implications of this, but the pandemic again, as I've said, has shaken the snow globe up, and all of those little glitter pieces haven't quite settled yet. They're still floating around. A lot of people were exposed to, well, we'll say remote learning that had not previously ever taken an online class. What that does for their expectations, for how they want to take classes that maybe they didn't think about previously, some of this may be driven by student demand. Institutions are going to have to meet students where they are, or their students are going to go places that give them that kind of flexibility.

Kelvin: What's your sports ballgame metaphor? Skate to where the puck is going to be?

Tom: That's right, yes. Thank you, Wayne Gretzky. Yeah.

Kelvin: Yeah. Any other highlights from the report that are worth calling out?

Tom: There was one other that I thought was really interesting, because we've talked about this just even recently when we've talked about, again, other post-pandemic ramifications that we've all been dealing with. One of those is a significantly increased demand on instructional design talent.

Kelvin: Yes.

Tom: That's reflected in the CHLOE 7 Report as well, along with others. There's instructional technologists, and faculty development, and advising, and some others, but I just kind of pulled out the ID chart, so again, in your hymnals at home it's on page 19.

It's broken down into a couple of different categories, and it compares 2019 to actuals in 2021, so this is not projecting like the last numbers, but this is '19 to '21. It looks at instructional designers that are in sort of a centralized unit, instructional designers that are kind of more distributed in colleges or local kind of organizations within an institution, and then outsourced ID, so like did you hire a company or something to do that?

Then they have a total, sort of an aggregate number. The bottom line here is in each one of these categories, it's pretty close to an increase over those two years of 20%, and then the total is exactly 20%, so give or take in each of those categories. But if you aggregate it up, it's a 20% increase. It's a remarkable increase in just two years in one job category, and it's similar with the educational technologists that they call out. I think it's just a reality that we're going to have to face. I actually am encouraged by this.

Kelvin: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I agree.

Tom: Because if we saw the kind of growth in online and blended learning that is not just seen, but predicted, and we didn't have a concomitant increase in instructional design, we're going to have an awful lot of bad courses out there, right?

Kelvin: Yeah, that's right. That's right. I think that's a very salient observation. Picking up on that thread for a second on a related topic about kind of quality, if I remember correctly, I jotted these notes down, that there was some mention, I don't have my page numbers memorized like you do, there was some mention of, yes, we have a lot of course and program standards. But there's not as much evaluating the actual efficacy of the implementation of those standards, like okay, standard 27. Is it there? Yes. Good. Move on. But does standard 27 actually mean anything? Does it have an effect? I joke a little bit about standard 27. It's really more of the whole package, like if you've done well holistically on these standards, does that make a

difference in the course? Does it make a difference for the students? That's been a bit of a perpetual criticism. We all sort of trust that that makes a difference, but okay, fair point. For quality's sake, we should be examining that.

Tom: Yeah, and in the absence of anything else, I mean, we have the standards. We've got really good ones out there, like Quality Matters, or the Oscar, or the OLC scorecards. UPC has got scorecards. There are good tools out there, and could they be improved? I'm sure. Could the actual implementation of it, I would like to see it, I think this is what you're getting at, as less a box checking exercise and more as a holistic awareness of what good instruction is, and have an intentionality to build a good course as opposed to, " I just got to check boxes."

Kelvin: Yeah, I remember reading, well, I'll dig it out and stick it in the show notes, and I'm probably going to completely butcher this insight, but I remember reading this paper by Tanya Joosten and Rachel Cusatis a couple years ago, pre-pandemic I think, and one of the biggest takeaways that I recall, at the end of the research article was that actual having design interventions is the biggest differentiator you can have to good outcomes, success or whatever.

Tom: Yeah, duh. [Laughter]

Kelvin: It's like, well, thank you. I'm glad to see that in writing somewhere. That's good. There's a lot of signal noise kind of stuff, but if you zoom out and you go well, we can say this, you actually have good design, good results. I'll put that in there. Then maybe related to that is I think the report authors note that while we have a lot of standards around course and program design, there's not as much work done in articulating, say through standards, effective practices around student services.

Tom: Yeah, yeah. I mean the one that I think we all know is the OLC Scorecard, which again, shout outs to the University System of Florida. Yeah, Vicki Brown at FAU sort of led that.

Kelvin: Josh Strigle.

Tom: Yep, yep, and that's a really good tool, and I would recommend people look at that if they want to start this whole idea of what is good student services for online students.

Kelvin: Yeah. I think that's good. I think that's good.

Tom: So, the title of this CHLOE Report, "Moving from Mainstream Acceptance to Universal Adoption" – I don't think we're quite there. I think the keyword in that is moving.

Kelvin: Moving, exactly. [Laughter] Way to identify the keyword right there.

Tom: Yeah, that moving is doing a lot of work in that title. But I think it's accurate. I mean, it does reflect, I think, this evolution. If you go back and you look at all of these in the past, you can definitely see the trend.

Kelvin: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. At the risk of going down too much of a rabbit trail, any further comment about kind of the place of reports like this that purport to have some kind of a predictive value?

Tom: Yeah. I mean, you can argue both sides of that. Again, when you're looking at 2025, it's very speculative. Who would have predicted what happened to us in 2020?

Kelvin: Very few people. [Laughter]

Tom: Very few, yes. But I think they're useful. They're useful in two ways, because when you're in the middle of a trend, you may not be able to see it, but if you just keep track and you can kind of step back and look at the forest instead of just an individual tree, and you realize, oh my gosh, this is a thing that's happening, and based upon that, you can kind of potentially predict where things are going in the future. To use your Gretzky, to go where the puck is, and prepare your organizations, your institutions, to try to meet the demand in the future because I think a lot of people ended up playing catch-up during the pandemic. We had a lot of Zoom school, and again, no fault to anybody, because it was just a reality, but I think if people had their preference, it would have been let's do this in a deliberate, intentional, high quality, planned way instead of reacting.

Kelvin: Yeah, I think that's good. Two shout outs come to mind. One, you actually used a phrase a little bit ago. I think you might have said hybrid university, so shout out to our colleagues and friends, Tanya Joosten and Tony Picciano, who've written about the blended university of the future. We'll dig some of that work out and put it in the show notes, if you don't know it.

Tom: They have a recent book Tanya was leading. I was fortunate enough to get an early preview of that. Yeah, it points to not just the online instruction, the hybrid instruction, to what we just talked about, the student services side of things. It covers all kinds of things, and I would even say it extends beyond that to can you pay your bills online? Can you do everything that you need to do multi-modal at an institution?

Kelvin: Yeah. I think that's right. The other shout out that comes to mind, we've ended up talking somewhat in this episode about the power of design and intentionality and deliberateness, and I'm reminded of our conversation with Shannon Riggs, which the episode title and number escape me at the moment, but it has design right in the title.

Tom: It's a good one.

Kelvin: We'll put that in the show notes as well if you're not familiar.

Tom: Cool. All right, so do you think maybe we should, you know?

Kelvin: Land the plane?

Tom: Land the plane?

Kelvin: Yeah.

Tom: Let me see if I can take a shot at summarizing here. Reports like CHLOE help us individually make sense of trends and opportunities in our field so that we can make better, more informed decisions about how to carry out our daily work. Discussing these insights and decisions with colleagues helps us move our field forward collectively, and we can put on those skates, and try to skate to where the puck is going because we want to score that goal. I'll stretch this metaphor. We've used baseball. We've used hockey. Maybe I can throw some other sports in there.

Kelvin: Badminton, something. [Laughter] No, I think that's right. I think all that is accurate. Yeah, and so like so many things we've talked about in the podcast, the more that we can share and talk about with others, I think we advance collectively. I think that's exactly right, for sure. Maybe one quick reminder, as you said at the beginning of the episode, hey, we'd love to hear your insights. We talked about predictive and reflective, right? We'd love to hear your insights on 2022 going into 2023. Hey, just record them on your phone or something, right, and email them to us, or write up a little thing. We'd love to hear from you, and we'll try to feature some of those in our December 2022 episode. That would be a good thing. That's been a good conversation. I hope you liked the coffee.

Tom: I did. Yeah, thank you, and just to underscore the call for input from people, even if you don't have time to record something right now, just send it to us in an email.

Kelvin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right.

Tom: Then we'll figure it out later.

Kelvin: Oh, man of a thousand voices, Tom Cavanagh, could vary his delivery like this one is going to be in my little old man voice.

Tom: Yeah. Who knows?

Kelvin: This one is going to be in my…

Tom: Pirate or something, yeah.

Kelvin: My cartoon squirrel voice. [Laughter]

Tom: If that's what it'll take, yes.

Kelvin: Boy, listenership is going to be up for that December episode now.

Tom: Or down. Yeah. [Laughter]

(*Musical outro*)

Kelvin: Well, on that note, thanks for listening. Thanks for the conversation and until next time, for TOPcast, I'm Kelvin.

Tom: And I'm Tom.

Kelvin: See you.