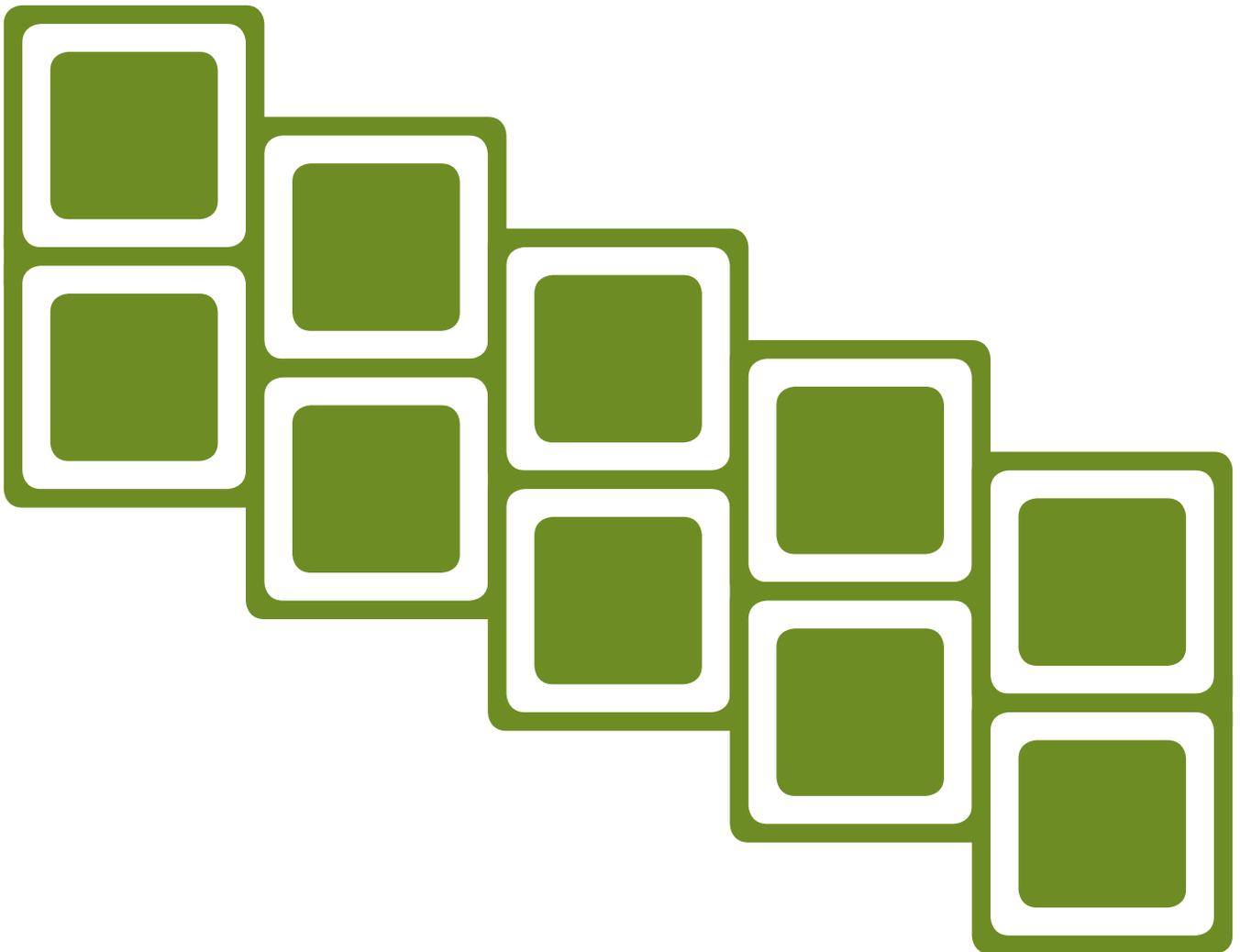


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Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning

José Antonio Bowen

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Eva Bogarty, author of a Moody's Investors Service report released in January 2013, states, "The U.S. higher education sector [after the 2008 economic downturn] had hit a critical juncture in the evolution of its business model" (Kiley, 2013). Higher education financial consultants explain that the 1960s model is now challenged by calls for efficiency in operations and technology to cut costs, and for strategic planning to prioritize ventures, open new markets, and clearly show benefits (Kiley, 2013).

Summer session administrators in higher education have reported decreasing enrollment in on-campus courses and increasing enrollment in online offerings for 2013. For traditional colleges and universities, the discussion of reducing or eliminating on-campus teaching in the summer in light of student demand and external competition is beginning. However, the belief in the added value of learning in a residential setting demands that institutions think creatively and articulate the benefits rather than simply give in.

In *Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning*, José Bowen offers a blueprint for keeping the traditional college experience relevant. Bowen contends that "the value of a bricks-and-mortar university will remain in its face-to-face (i.e., naked) interaction between faculty and students." He makes the case that student learning is superior (and worth the cost) when technology and faculty do what each does best. Designed in three parts, the book provides the reader with what is needed to achieve that balance.

Part One analyzes the influences of technology on society over the past 50 years. Bowen provides a concise overview of the evolution of the digital age, supported with observations from scholars conducting research globally. The three chapters trace the changes in access to information. Now that knowledge of all kinds is obtainable by anyone with an Internet connection, learning has been transformed, much like it was with the invention of the printing press. Knowledge seekers are no longer dependent upon a place or a book. Bowen enumerates the growth of online offerings, including free content providers such as the Khan Academy, for-credit online courses offered by traditional colleges, online degrees from for-profit universities, and the advent of massive open online courses (MOOCs). He also discusses the most effective types of online learning and makes the case for changing the way faculty teach in the bricks-and-mortar setting.

The second section of the book is intended as a guide for the teacher wishing to try “teaching naked.” These chapters give the reader the full range of options, from using just a few new ideas to developing a comprehensive syllabus that implements all of the concepts Bowen offers. The themes that provide the foundation for each aspect of this teaching approach are discussed in a few pages, followed by specific ways to actualize each in the classroom. Bowen directs the reader to resources in various formats, including videos, exercises, facilitated discussions, games, and activities. He shares his dos and don’ts of using social media, talks about students’ reactions to his teaching approach, and demonstrates the important value added to learning in this environment. Students in this learning model must come to class prepared, because they will have to use the content provided outside of class to interact with the instructor and their fellow students during the scheduled class time. This challenges the students but leads to a much richer education that teaches them to analyze the applicability of content, adapt what they learn, create new ideas, and innovate.

Bowen expands the scope in Part Three by going beyond the classroom, looking to a future of naked curricula and naked universities. The digital age is particularly challenging to colleges in the United States. The traditional slow, deliberative approach to change in higher education cannot continue to be the colleges’ and universities’ reaction to the challenges they confront in the 21st century. Bowen asserts that the technology boom is exacerbated by the other problems facing higher education: rising costs, declining state and federal funding, shifts in demographics, loss of entire professions, the lightning speed of job transitions, and competition from every sector. He argues that “teaching naked is a vital strategy for survival” of higher education and explains how to apply the concept to the curriculum and the institution.

Teaching Naked is a fast read, as the reader is pulled along by intriguing approaches to a serious challenge facing all in higher education. But it is also a manual for converting a classroom into an interactive space that uses technology not to replace the teacher but to allow students to obtain content in the best ways possible and then apply it in a face-to-face, dynamic setting. The book provides a wealth of research that is valuable for informing decisions on the costs and benefits of an education that goes beyond learning static material from common sources.

References

Kiley, Kevin. (2013, January 17). Nowhere to turn. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/01/17/moodys-report>

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