

(last updated August 2024)

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE B. Promoting online learning at the University of Rochester

BRIEF DESCRIPTION - FROM THE 2019 LiDA STRATEGIC PLAN:

Perhaps the most important context where we want to enrich students' digitally-rich learning experiences (Goal #1) is our own University. Taking on an active leadership role in UR online teaching initiatives will increase awareness of the LiDA Center within the University community (Goal #3), and has also the potential to develop a strong UR "sub-community" within the larger LiDA Community (Goal #4).

(NOTE: hereafter, * indicates LiDA staff, and ** indicates other LiDA Community members, including and LiDA affiliated faculty)

A unique partnership

The LiDA Center is in a unique position to make a difference in the University of Rochester's online offerings, thanks to *Fredericksen's dual appointment as the university-wide Associate Vice-President for Online Learning, as well as the Associate Director for Higher Education at LiDA and a faculty member in the Warner School. Therefore, it has been our goal from the beginning to capitalize on the potential synergy between those two positions, seeing *Fredericksen's work as a unique partnership between the LiDA Center and the Office of the Provost. Consistent with this vision, in this progress report we will highlight major initiatives and accomplishments towards the common goal of promoting online learning at the UR, without differentiating between *Fredericksen's two roles, as we recognize the value of this effective and efficient relationship.

Pre-pandemic key initiatives and accomplishments

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, *Fredericksen and **Brown offered a wide range of professional learning opportunities to UR instructors interested in teaching online - including a series of lectures from experts in the field as part of a [Fall Symposium Series](#) offered each year. They also offered several 1-hour workshops to introduce various tools and techniques, as well as a modified version of Warner's sequence of courses on online teaching (as summarized in the "[Especially for UR faculty](#)" page on the LiDA Center website). This led to many faculty success stories, some of which have been captured on video from presentations that take place every year as part of the [Fall Symposium](#). These initiatives also greatly contributed to increasing the number of Warner faculty prepared to design and facilitate high-quality online courses.

In his role as co-chair of the [Educational IT Governance Committee](#) (a group comprising of a faculty and IT staff representative from each UR academic unit), *Fredericksen was able to facilitate university-wide conversations about instructional innovations as well as technology challenges related to online teaching and learning. Together with **Peyre (as the committee co-chair at the time), in 2019 *Fredericksen initiated and secured funding for a new program - Educational IT-Innovation grants - which lead to several valuable projects to promote higher-quality online learning across the University (see [list of innovation grants awarded in 2019](#)).

*Fredericksen was also one of the main organizers of the [2019 Faculty Summit](#), a one-day event for UR faculty to share and discuss their experiences with online learning, and learn

about new tools as well as university initiatives that could support their work. This event was co-sponsored by the LiDA Center along with the Office of Academic Administration and the Educational IT Governance Committee.

Supporting “emergency” remote instruction (March-April 2020)

(NOTE: These is an excerpt reproduced from the Strategic Initiative F Progress Report, given the overlap between these two initiatives)

As schools and universities were abruptly closed and had to quickly figure out how to deliver instruction remotely in March 2020, there was an immediate need to help educators at all level in these efforts.

Within our institution, *Fredericksen, in his role of Associate Vice-President of Online Learning, played a critical role in a number of complementary ways. First, he immediately called for daily meetings of the University IT Governance Committee, including IT staff and faculty representatives of key units across the university, so this group could share challenges encountered and discuss possible solutions in real time, thus learning from each other and providing a vehicle to coordinate (or at least influence) important university-wide decisions.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the faculty at the University of Rochester had to quickly transition to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to support their students and help them successfully complete their courses for the Spring 2020 semester. At that moment, University leadership through *Fredericksen and **Brown stepped up to the challenge and supported faculty in this effort by focusing on “how” to translate in person classroom instructional activities and assessments to potential online counterparts. These efforts about “emergency remote teaching” helped instructors across the UR who had never taught online before (reaching several hundred UR instructors and staff). They also created a rich website for [instructors](#) and [students](#) for “just-in-time” learning and reference. Other LiDA staff also offered one-on-one support and facilitated debriefing sessions for Warner instructors. *Borasi and *Fredericksen were also part of discussions held within the Warner leadership team that led to an early decision of moving to fully online all our course offerings for Summer and Fall 2020.

Preparing for Quality Remote Instruction (May 2020-August 2020)

(NOTE: Another excerpt reproduced from Strategic Initiative F)

In the months that followed, it became clear that instruction would not likely go back to normal for the next academic year. *Fredericksen and **Brown developed a “condensed” version of the sequence of courses at the core of Warner Advanced Certificate in Online Teaching. These efforts about “real” online teaching and learning included “why” the faculty might want to employ specific online learning activities and their advantages. And instead of *Fredericksen’s typical single summer course, ten sections of his course on Designing and Developing Online Courses were offered over summer 2020, serving more than 150 UR faculty and instructors. Most Warner instructors that had not previously taught online took this course. Workshop offerings were also repeated multiple times and were very well attended. Additional support was once again provided by LiDA staff to interested Warner instructors in the form of additional workshops, facilitated debriefing, and one-one-one support. These efforts led to redesigned fully online courses of high quality to be offered at Warner over the 2020-21 academic year -- as attested by the fact that course evaluations

were on average the same as or higher than in previous years. They also influenced course redesign and delivery in other UR academic units that up to that point had been resistant to consider online instruction; in several cases, faculty teaching online for the first time with this support reported their surprise (and delight) about its effectiveness and acknowledged previous misconceptions about this mode of instruction.

The following 1-hour workshops were offered in summer 2020 alone:

- June 15, 2020 – How-to Record and Deliver Video Lectures to your Students
- June 17, 2020 – How to Facilitate Discussion, Sharing of Student Work, and Peer Review Activities Using Blackboard Tools
- June 19, 2020 – How to Facilitate a Live Zoom Class Session
- June 22, 2020 – How to Use VoiceThread for Discussions
- June 24, 2020 – How to Use Yellow Dig for Discussions
- June 26, 2020 – How to Facilitate Online Discussions
- July 1, 2020 – How to Facilitate Blackboard Tests
- July 13, 2020 – Blackboard Basics
- July 15, 2020 – Zoom for Live Classes
- July 20, 2020 – Recording and Sharing (Zoom and Panopto)
- July 24, 2020 – How to Facilitate Blackboard Tests
- July 27, 2020 – How to Use VoiceThread for Discussions
- July 29, 2020 – How to Facilitate Online Discussions
- August 3, 2020 – How to Use the Blackboard Grade Center
- August 10, 2020 – Online Assignments and Presentations
- August 12, 2020 – How to Facilitate Online Discussions
- August 14, 2020 – How to Record Lectures
- August 17, 2020 – How to Facilitate Live Zoom sessions
- August 19, 2020 – Using the New Zoom Meeting Manager
- August 21, 2020 – Intro to Padlet

Continuing to support online teaching and learning towards a “new normal” (Sept. 2020-to date)

*Fredericksen and **Brown have continued to offer sections of their courses to UR faculty to help them design and develop online courses.

Every year, *Fredericksen and **Brown have also continued to provide workshops for UR instructors on the previous topics as well as more advanced ones (for a complete list of the workshops offered, see <https://www.rochester.edu/online-learning/>). Attendance at these workshops has been evidence of the renewed interest in online teaching across UR faculty.

As co-chair of the Educational IT Governance Committee, *Fredericksen has also been instrumental in supporting innovation in online teaching at the UR through additional rounds of Educational IT Innovation Grants in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Several new projects have been funded under this initiative (a complete list with brief descriptions can be found at: <https://www.rochester.edu/online-learning/edtechgov/index.html>).