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GREETINGS FROM ODL

Spring (and pollen) is in the air, and the time to tackle home and garden projects is at hand. Before you repair that deck or plant those flowers, you need to make sure you have the proper tools to complete the task. The same can be said for sprucing up your online course site. From A to Z (Ally to Zoom), the



university provides a toolkit full of technologies that can help you improve your online courses and engage students for success.

In this issue of *Distance Up Close*, we highlight three tools that can help with student engagement in your course. PlayPosit can create an interactive video experience for students. The tool is currently in pilot through the summer and we encourage you to join. Email Instructional Development Faculty [Liyang Miao](#) to participate. With the social annotation tool Hypothesis,

your students can annotate online course readings, prompting them to connect with their peers. Yellowdig improves upon Canvas’s built-in discussion tool for strong student interaction. You can read more in the “Tools & Technology” section below.

For the DIY types, we’ve developed a series of video tutorials to help you create engaging media content for your courses. The videos provide best practices for lighting and audio and show you how to enrich your course with transitions, text, and precise editing. Using these techniques can help your students better interact with the course material.

Need guidance using these tools? Turn to our helpdesk! Our Technology Support team is a master of course tools and technologies and has spent the past year remotely helping instructors with Kaltura and Zoom, among other tools and Canvas issues. Meet our team below and see how they ensure our faculty receive top-notch technology assistance.

Thank you for supporting our students, and please let us know if there's any way we can help you.
Happy spring!

IN THE NEWS

Best Practices Enhance Course Media

The effective use of media in a course can enhance student engagement and success. The Office of Distance Learning offers a six-part video tutorial series to help instructors create skillfully shot and edited videos. To access these tutorials, visit our [best practices article](#) and learn tips and techniques to enrich your online course with media. The series includes the following tutorials:



- **Best Practices for Online Course Videos.** In this tutorial, you'll learn about the importance of lighting, shot composition, and audio and how to achieve a professional look that will engage your audience.
- **Transferring Video Footage to Your Computer.** Learn how to incorporate videos in your online courses and how to transfer video footage from your camera or smartphone to your laptop.
- **Uploading and Cutting Footage.** This tutorial helps you simplify the video editing process. By learning how to make simple cuts to your video, you'll provide a seamless viewing experience for your audience.
- **Adding Transitions between Shots.** Learn how to make a video more visually appealing for your audience. In this tutorial, you'll explore how to choose transitions and add them between clips.
- **Adding Text to Your Video.** This tutorial demonstrates how to add text to media. This can help your audience understand what the video is about, who is in it, and what their role was. Additional clarification can play a key role in viewer engagement.
- **Exporting Your Course Video.** Once you have mastered the basics of video editing, the next step is exporting your media. The final video of this series shows how to export video footage and prepare it for your online course.

Visit ODL's [media production services](#) page for additional resources to help you enhance your online courses. To schedule specific services, contact ODL's Media Production Administrator D.D. Garbarino at dgarbarino@fsu.edu.

ODL Helpdesk Handles Double Workload

Canvas usage and the workload of the ODL Technical Support team during the fully remote Fall 2020 semester essentially doubled when compared with Fall 2019. A large portion of the helpdesk's time in support tickets was spent working on external apps and providing training:

- **External apps.** The team worked with instructors who were new to external apps—especially Kaltura and Zoom—and were in some cases new to using Canvas. The media tool Kaltura and

web-conferencing tool Zoom, which are integrated into Canvas, were critical in lieu of the physical classroom and in-person interactions common to most of the FSU community.

- **Training.** The team completed virtual and over-the-phone training with instructors about ways to adapt face-to-face material into an online format, such as converting paper exams into Canvas quizzes and assignments.



Approximately half of the support interactions were phone-based, demonstrating that on-demand support volume was very high – instructors and students were looking for quick help from a team member to resolve their concerns. Since remote learning was not second nature despite the experience gained from Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 terms, those seeking assistance realized the importance of working with a team member to ensure they had completed their task correctly.

Our technical vendors experienced outages and had to continue to scale up to meet the national and global demands placed on their services and products for Fall 2020. Despite these challenges, the team sought to provide kind, patient, and helpful support to the university community.

Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 Comparison

Item	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Number of published course sections in Canvas	6,301	6,706
First day of class participations in Canvas (e.g., discussion post, syllabus quiz)	30, 293	77,317
Total number of Canvas assignments	81,743	112,965
Total number of Canvas discussion topics	65,006	108,586
Total support tickets* submitted and answered	3,072	6,252

*Numbers represent a single submission and do not account for follow-up responses.

Month-by-Month Comparison of Support Tickets*

Month	2019 tickets	2020 tickets
August	1,334	2,949
September	950	1,541
October	715	988
November	510	609
December	574	912

*Numbers represent a single submission and do not account for follow-up responses.



Meet the ODL Technical Support team, along with Project Manager Camilla Fincham and Business Analyst Dewel Lindsey of our Technology unit. Top row (L-R): Amanda Whitaker, Camilla Fincham, Irvin “Kip” Butts; 2nd row (L-R): Emily “Emma” Riley, Chase Belgard, Tywan Harris; 3rd row (L-R): Alex Washington, Grady “Charlie” Barrineau, Dewel Lindsey; bottom row: Hansley Dol.

ODL Technical Support: Meet the Team



The ODL Technical Support team has experienced personnel changes over the last year – we’ve bid farewell to folks who’ve moved on to new opportunities and welcomed new faces to the team. We’re grateful for each team member’s hard work and the collegial and collaborative spirit they bring to the helpdesk. While it’s difficult to begin a new position remotely, especially with the support demands over the past year, we’re proud of how both our seasoned and new staff have risen to the challenge and shared knowledge and assistance across the team. Meet the team behind the calls, consultations, and support tickets:

- **Irvin “Kip” Butts**, Interim Support Manager, stepped into this position in Fall 2020 and has been collaborating with **Amanda Whitaker** to deliver Honorlock and Canvas Quiz webinar trainings to instructors. Amanda quickly became our go-to Honorlock expert and has been meticulous in troubleshooting challenging, highly detailed technical issues that arise.
- **Chase Belgard**, veteran technical support specialist, has been a rock for our team by tackling a variety of project tasks, including assisting with the technical side of producing this newsletter, and helping our newer staff gain confidence through practical experience – all during the busy fall season of tickets and calls.
- **Tywan Harris** joined the team in January 2020 and if you’ve called us, you’ve probably spoken to him on the phone since he has logged an impressive number of calls over the past year despite working only part time.
- **Emily Riley** and **Grady “Charlie” Barrineau** joined our helpdesk at the start of Fall 2020 and have enthusiastically tackled odd technical issues and project tasks that help keep the entire team on track.

- Our newest team members, **Alex Washington** and **Hansley Dol**, joined us this spring and have eagerly embraced basic training and learning the nuances of the technologies we support.

Ally & Accessibility: Five Easy Fixes



The course accessibility tool Ally was enabled in all Canvas courses in December 2020. The Office of Distance Learning has developed a *Course Accessibility: Five Easy Fixes* series of tips to help instructors improve course navigation and make course content more accessible for all students:

- [#1: How to Add Image Descriptions](#). Students using assistive technology such as screen readers rely on images to understand what a picture or chart is showing.
- [#2: How to Fix Contrast Issues](#). Ensuring optimal contrast in your documents helps all students but especially those with visual impairments such as color blindness.
- [#3: How to Add a Missing Title](#). By adding a descriptive and meaningful title to a document, you can help students navigate content with greater speed and ease.
- [#4: How to Add Headings in Documents](#). Students using assistive technology such as screen readers depend on the proper use of heading styles to navigate content.
- [#5: How to Convert a Word file to a PDF](#). Resolving issues such as untagged documents and a missing language set will help as you convert a Word document to a PDF.

For support materials designed to help you make learning more inclusive, visit the [Ally Resource Guide](#).



Ready for your close-up?

The ODL Media Production team can meet you on location to shoot video for your online course. In this shot at Deep Brewery, owner Ryan LaPete is seen on camera and in the background chatting with Libby Lewis, specialized faculty with the FSU Dedman College of Hospitality. The video is for Lewis's course,

CANVAS FYI



Canvas Release Notes

The [March release notes](#) from Canvas describe how students can use their webcam to submit File Upload assignments if needed. You'll also find updated features related to course settings, the Rich Content Editor, and more. An updated feature for April involves course settings, where the course participation settings interface has been adjusted for greater clarity. Read more in the [April release notes](#).

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Hypothesis Insights from FSU Faculty



hypothes.is

The social annotation tool [Hypothesis](#) is available for use in Canvas through August 2021. With Hypothesis, your students can annotate online course readings and webpages, encouraging them to connect and engage with the content and their peers.

Dr. Meegan Kennedy, Associate Professor in the FSU English Department, shares her experience of working with Hypothesis and how the tool helps with student engagement, reading comprehension, and the development of critical thinking skills:



"I've used Hypothesis since 2015; it helps me keep students engaged and assess their understanding of concepts and arguments in the texts I've assigned. When using annotation tools like Hypothesis, students must link their comments to a particular word, phrase, or passage. This keeps the discussion anchored in specific evidence for their claim or question, a practice that carries over to their efforts in writing analytic papers. Students can link to external sources and reply to one another, so it allows a form of asynchronous class discussion that is useful in all kinds of classes.

I love that Hypothesis provides a site for students to practice their active reading, so I can easily see who has done the reading, and I can focus the discussion on places where students have questions or misunderstand the reading assignment. I've found their help desk to be responsive and helpful, and the Canvas integration means I can grade annotations in the SpeedGrader on my course site.

Hypothesis is an especially valuable tool for text-based courses, but it should help improve student preparation, reading comprehension, and class discussion in any course with assigned reading.”

Hypothesis Training

To provide you with strategies to implement annotation in your courses, [Hypothesis](#) offers April and May online workshops to the university community:

- **Using Hypothesis with small groups.** Explore how to use Hypothesis in small groups and how social annotation can foster a collaborative learning environment.
- **Grading Hypothesis-enabled readings.** The Hypothesis team shares examples of annotations in courses and demonstrates how to grade readings.
- **Using multimedia in annotations.** Learn how to add multimedia as annotations, including embedding images and videos.
- **Creative ways to use social annotation in your courses.** Discuss how to use collaborative annotation your learning objectives.

You can [register for these sessions](#) on the Hypothesis workshops page. For recordings of previous workshops, visit the [Hypothesis YouTube channel](#).

PlayPosit Training Available



As the Office of Distance Learning continues to pilot the interactive video tool [PlayPosit](#) through the Summer 2021 semester, we’re making training available for instructors who are interested in learning more about the tool.

PlayPosit focuses on creating an interactive video experience for students. You can personalize learning pathways, embed simulations, and build threaded discussion boards into your instructional videos.

Since the beginning of the pilot in August 2020, 409 instructors and 1,052 active students have used PlayPosit. Instructors have built 110 bulbs. A bulb is PlayPosit’s term for an interactive video.

How to Get Training

You can [register for the following PlayPosit webinars](#):

- Using the Broadcast Mode
- Using the Web Embed Interaction
- Introducing the Playlist Application
- Managing Your Media Library

How to Join the Pilot

If you or your colleagues are interested in participating in the pilot study, please contact Liying Miao at lmiao@campus.fsu.edu. ODL Technical Support and PlayPosit account managers will provide technical assistance during the pilot.

Yellowdig Improves Student Discussions



[Yellowdig](#) is a dynamic social learning tool that greatly improves on Canvas's built-in Discussion tool for student engagement and interaction. The Yellowdig platform allows instructors to track engagement, share content, and track participation. Students can communicate about class content and share resources. The tool helps establish learning communities so students can learn from each other anytime, anywhere, and from any device.

For resources, you can review the following:

- [Instructor Certification Course](#)
- [Guide to Best Practices](#)
- [Knowledge Base](#)
- [YouTube Channel](#)

For more information, see the [Yellowdig support article](#), which provides details on the tool's student-pay model and how to convey this information to your students.

ODDS & ENDS

Conferences & Events

- [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#), May 20, 2021. The purpose of this day is to focus on digital access and inclusion.
- [International Society for Technology in Education conference](#), June 26–30, 2021. The ISTE Live 21 Conference & Expo, "Designing a New Learning Landscape," will be held online. Early-bird registration is now available.

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