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## Zoom Behaviors and Expectations: The Non-Obvious

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**Extended Abstract of Roundtable Session “Zoom Behaviors and Expectations: The Non-Obvious”**

Presented at NSEE 50th Annual Conference <https://www.nsee.org/annual-conference>  
Monday, September 27— Wednesday, September 29, 2021  
Conference Theme: Celebrating 50 Years: Experiential Education in an Ever-Changing World  
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**Article Title: “Zoom Behaviors and Expectations: The Non-Obvious”**

**Keywords:** COVID-19, rushed, online learning, Zoom behaviors, New Normal

**Session Abstract**

Experiential education is about engaging students in active learning. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we needed to meet social-distancing needs through learning activities online in a hurry. As we strived to keep students engaged online, we became aware of assumptions that students “just knew” how to behave in Zoom meetings. We realized that ground rules needed to be set clearly, so we designed, developed and implemented a pilot course for Zoom participation. College faculty were surveyed, and results and conclusions are discussed. We share how we faced change, and how to implement proven practices for the New Normal.

**Session outcomes**

After the session, audience members should be able to articulate:

1. the importance of experiential education in online contexts, especially during periods perceived by students as unwanted or "forced" online learning
2. the importance of creating “on-the-fly” solutions to address abrupt educational challenges in times of unprecedented change, while developing an awareness of student’s individual challenges when learning online in an unplanned manner

3. how to harness the power of interdepartmental collaboration in addressing faculty development needs with limited resources and hurried timelines
4. how to achieve quality, equity, and student engagement through the design, implementation, and assessment of high-impact practices for the online classroom
5. how to develop plans to implement institutional-wide practices by piloting solutions in a smaller-scale first, and exchange ideas to overcome roadblocks

## **Introduction**

In the midst of an unprecedented worldwide pandemic, most educational institutions found themselves switching to online learning in a hurry, as did we at the Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University. We encountered some unexpected student behaviors in Zoom meetings, so we realized that ground rules for participation in Zoom were not as obvious as we had assumed. Accordingly, we designed, developed and implemented the “Zoom Etiquette and Expectations: Preparing for Success” -“Zoom Course”, for short- which we deployed in January 2021.

In this session we share how we faced change, and how to implement proven practices moving forward, as new baselines for the New Normal, however that will look. This presentation is relevant to this year's NSEE's conference theme of “Experiential Education in an Ever-Changing World” because it presents an institutional effort created to address specific challenges brought about by the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic.

## **Expanded Description of this Presentation**

### **Why?**

This pilot project was created to bring effective practices to scale in a time of unprecedented changes, limited resources, rushed timelines, and variations in modes of delivery.

The tailor-made “Zoom Course” was created to bridge the gap between some student behaviors observed and the ideal behaviors and attitudes expected from college-level students in an online environment.

### **Who?**

The Zoom Course was created by a team of instructional technology and academic support specialists, as a joint effort between the Halmos College of Arts & Sciences and the Learning and Educational Center (NSU, 2021) at NSU. As we had to start teaching and learning fully online (in some cases without appropriate preparation), we felt we were “putting out fires” with limited resources. The collaboration between different departments allowed for efficient use of available resources in a short time.

### **When?**

While it is fair to say that change is often disruptive, the COVID-19 pandemic took that notion to a whole new level (CDC, 2021). By March of 2020 (halfway through the Winter semester) as COVID-19 hit, we were forced to switch to fully online course delivery. Although we had already had access to virtual video-conferencing technologies, such as Zoom, for the last ten years (Serhan, 2020), up to then it had been a “nice to have” in the classroom. However, by the time COVID-19 hit, virtual video-conferencing had become our only means of keeping our classroom doors open, albeit virtually (Murphy, 2020). The good news is that we, at our school, were already using Zoom and it was seamlessly integrated with our Canvas LMS. By the time the Winter term ended, we reflected back on the previous semester and started planning for the upcoming Summer term. Since several instructors had reported various instances of students behaving less-than-ideally in Zoom meetings during the second half of the Winter term, we tried

to anticipate how the upcoming Fall term would work out in terms of virtual meetings and student behaviors. That's how, why, and when the Zoom Course was conceived.

### **What?**

The Zoom Course was hosted in the Canvas LMS, and it was created following the ADDIE model for the design, development and implementation of the course (Culatta, 2021). The course featured a Course Introduction, which included the course goal and the learning objectives; a Learning Module (content presentation); a Simulation (guided practice activity), and a Quiz (assessment) according to best practices in instructional design adapted to the scope of this course (Gagne, 1985; Gagne & Briggs, 1974). At the end students submitted a badge as proof of completion to their professor. Clear instructions were provided at every step to minimize confusion and isolation and enhance the overall student experience as much as possible.

The Zoom Course detailed specific behaviors and technical preparations to consider before, during, and after the Zoom meeting. The goal of the course was: "Students will use basic Zoom features and etiquette to maximize learning success". The specific learning objectives were that students would be able to: (1) Set up their personal environment so that it was conducive to learning; (2) Join a Zoom class; (3) Recognize appropriate behaviors for participation; and (4) Troubleshoot technical difficulties.

Some of the observed issues that we expected to address by implementing this course had to do with behavioral matters, and others with technical aspects. Behavioral examples included students attending class Zoom meetings from bed, from the restroom, from the grocery store, in inappropriate attire, and the list goes on. There were also issues related to the background of the Zoom meeting (whether the place was messy, had distracting or flashing lighting, etc.), or

whether there were other people behind the student (sometimes they were walking by, other times they appeared on camera half-dressed, screaming or fighting, etc.). There was also the netiquette component (etiquette governing communication on the Internet), such as being respectful of others while in meetings. Several students asked to turn their video camera off, even if the instructor had indicated otherwise. When asked, some students explained that they felt overwhelmed by seeing their own image on screen, known as Zoom fatigue (Stanford, 2021; Ramachandran, 2021). Zoom fatigue includes general, physical, social, emotional, and motivational fatigue. Accordingly, we included a section in the Zoom course explaining how to use the “hide self-view” feature in Zoom to reduce cognitive overload. In terms of technical issues, some included audio and video issues (such as poor lighting and ambient noise), inadequate hardware and software configurations, insufficient Internet/bandwidth connectivity and speed, and general access problems when trying to join the Zoom meetings, among others. Finally, some students and faculty reported discomfort with the lack of choice to teach and learn fully online, and some faculty reported challenges related to the lack of faculty training to teach online.

### **So What?**

As we reflected on the profound changes we just experienced at a global level, we realized that this event also presented an unprecedented opportunity for the immediate future. In order to apply lessons learned, once our pilot semester ended, we analyzed the data and found that 1,272 students had completed the Zoom Course by the end of January 2021. College faculty were subsequently surveyed using an in-house survey created for this purpose. The faculty respondents were selected based on who had taught both during the Winter and Fall semesters of 2020, since they were the ones able to compare Zoom behaviors before and after the

implementation of the Zoom course. Of 211 surveys emailed, we received 94 complete responses. Questions asked about faculty perceptions of improved student behaviors in Zoom meetings (Tufts University, 2020). The faculty survey prompted instructors to share whether they had perceived an improvement in remote student behaviors in Zoom meetings during the semester following the implementation of the Zoom course. Questions asked about remote students' overall adherence to and improvement in Zoom etiquette and guidelines; set up of the learning environment; preparedness for class; behavior during class; use of Zoom features and attendee controls when in class; and ability to troubleshoot technical difficulties before joining the Zoom session. Complete survey questions are presented in Appendix A. Survey questions featured a 5-point Likert scale for responses (1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree; and an N/A option). Faculty-reported perceptions of student behaviors fell mostly under 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree; and 4=Agree, with a few responses falling under 2=Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree.

The move to forced remote learning was not easy for either faculty or students, many of whom were unprepared for, and unwilling towards, the sudden shift. Although we focused our course on the behaviors and tech-support issues observed, upon reflecting on the findings we realized that student attitudes towards using Zoom in the transition to fully online learning were at the center of several of the behaviors we encountered.

### **Now What?**

As we examine efforts to implement educational change and bring effective practices to scale in the New Normal - however that will look (Slapak-Barski, 2020) it is imperative that we use this critical time as an opportunity to start delineating strategies to promote change moving forward, keeping what worked and springing forward armed with lessons learned from a time of

unprecedented change, limited resources, and all kinds of variations in modes of delivery. Some of those lessons learned include the undervalued importance of the element of choice in engaging in online instruction; the effects of stress and Zoom fatigue from interpersonal interaction through video-conferencing technology; the need for intentionally surveying students and addressing (a) emotional, behavioral, and attitudinal issues that arise as a result of the imposed change and subsequent Zoom fatigue, and (b) financial constraints and equity considerations that may prevent students from accessing the online classroom with adequate hardware, software, and Internet connectivity; the need for a consistent survey instrument to assess the achievement of course goals and appropriate online behaviors; the need for faculty development in the use of instructional technology (Bao, 2020); and the development of a comprehensive action plan to implement sustainable models and strategies that consider the advancement of quality, equity, and student engagement in fully online learning environments (Bozkurt, 2021; Toquero, 2020).

Although this course was created as an on-the-fly solution to address the specific social-distancing needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be used moving forward in any online learning course. Future iterations of this course should be followed up by both faculty and student surveys (AACU, 2021, Serhan 2020; Tufts University, 2020). Results from such surveys could be used to compare and contrast faculty and student perceptions of online learning before and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Slapak-Barski, 2017) and feedback should be used to inform the redesign and development of new iterations of the course.

The Zoom course is one example of a strategy that could become a pre-requisite for any future online courses, especially if there is a chance that they will include a synchronous online meeting (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020; Akyol, Garrison & Ozden, 2009; Demuyakor, 2020). During such meetings, instructors should “model the model” and exhibit the behaviors they

expect students to uphold (Slapak-Barski, 2020). Moving forward the Zoom course could be expanded to include concepts of the COI (Community of Inquiry) framework to dramatically improve our understanding of best practices in online synchronous classroom meetings and delineate all-encompassing guidelines (Swan & Ice, 2010). Finally, although this course detailed specific features and functionalities of the Zoom platform, the principles of appropriate video conferencing behaviors and netiquette apply to any virtual synchronous video meeting platform.

### **Some Final Thoughts**

We are just beginning to better understand how to create best practices and guidelines for video-conferencing courses in the post-COVID-19 educational landscape. In the New Normal, videoconferencing is here to stay, and prompts us to consider benefits and challenges that were not in play before the pandemic.

The time has come to resist the urge of going back to old familiar ways, and instead envision a new teaching-and-learning reality moving forward. A new reality that includes a mix of multiple theoretical foundations and learning perspectives, a thorough analysis of the interrelated elements and infrastructure necessary for all video-conferencing users, and consideration of newly discovered issues such as “Zoom fatigue”. With this information, we may start delineating institutional guidelines and techniques to promote educational change, ensure consistency of implementation, and enhance institutional capacity for quality and student engagement.

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## Appendix A

### Zoom Etiquette & Expectations Survey of Faculty

## Zoom Etiquette & Expectations Survey of Faculty

This survey intends to measure faculty perceptions about current student preparedness for attending classes via Zoom as compared to prior terms.

E-mail sent to instructors

Dear Faculty,

You are receiving this survey because you have taught in both semesters, Fall 2020 and Winter 2021. We appreciate your input and feedback, as it will help HCAS leadership with future steps to provide our students and instructors with the best possible learning environment.

Please continue to the following link and select one answer to each question using the following scale: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree; or N/A. Thank you for your participation!

### Survey Questions

1. In general, I have noticed a positive change in my students' overall adherence to Zoom Etiquette and Guidelines during the winter term, as compared to the Fall 2020 term among those who are attending classes remotely"
2. I have noticed an improvement in students' set up of their learning environment (in terms of visual, noise, lighting, clothing, or overall appearance aspects)
3. I have noticed an improvement in students' preparedness for class (e.g., arriving early, having materials ready, having assignments completed before class)
4. I have noticed an improvement in students' behavior when in class (e.g., being attentive, being ready to learn, attending from an acceptable environment, avoiding roaming around the room, avoiding multi-tasking or engaging in activities out of class, avoiding eating, avoiding laying down, other)
5. I have noticed an improvement in students' use of Zoom features and attendee controls when in class (e.g., joining muted by default, turning video on and off as appropriate, looking at the camera when speaking, renaming themselves if appropriate, using the chat, other)
6. I have noticed an improvement in students' use of netiquette (e.g., respecting others and their opinions, picking the right tone, reflecting professionalism in an academic setting, other)
7. have noticed an improvement in students' ability to troubleshoot technical difficulties (joining a meeting, troubleshooting audio or video issues, other)