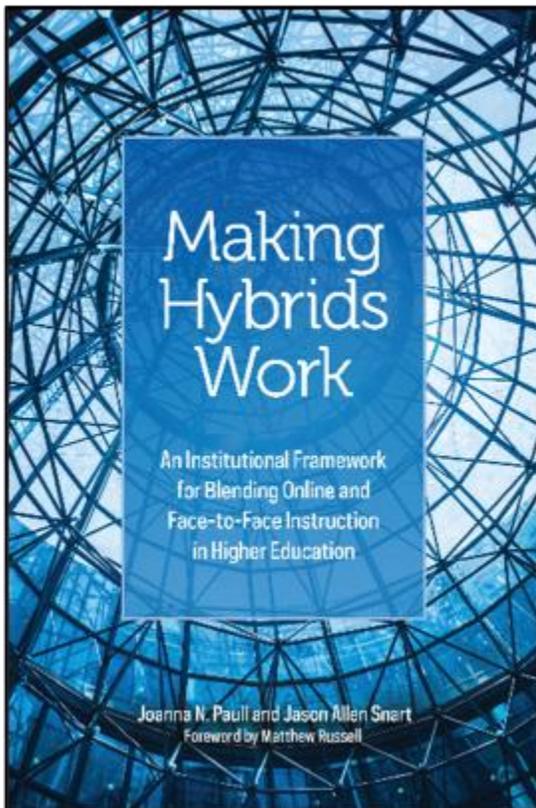


## ***Making Hybrids Work: An Institutional Framework for Blending Online and Face-to-Face Instruction in Higher Education***

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Face-to-face discourse and interactions have been considered essential in certain academic circles, but with 21st century technology, college and university student needs are redefining higher education and effective teaching. *Making Hybrids Work: An Institutional Framework for Blending Online and Face-to-Face Instruction in Higher Education* fills an important gap in the up-and-coming hybrid teaching mode by providing a comprehensive look at how to create a meaningful, sustainable curriculum that serves students and instructors, and becomes synonymous with educational excellence. The authors think beyond the design of a single course and take a big picture look at how an entire department, division, and overall institution can create effective learning through hybrid teaching. They argue that success is connected to infrastructure, funding, clarity and buy-in at multiple levels of an institution to support online and face-to-face blended, hybrid teaching. Ultimately, hybrid development must be considered a never-ending process, according to the authors; a growth philosophy that aligns with instructors and institutions that strive to become better at educating students every day. Ongoing, however,

means constant change and that is not easy, so suggestions are targeted toward decision-makers and full-time influencers that can create continuity within institutions.

The book provides steps on how to assess hybrid needs, plan in the short and long-terms, formalize plans, implement plans, then evaluate and revise processes on a regular basis. It is an insightful read, but there are times when concepts on how to create a shared institutional vision might be far-reaching; however, the book is packed full of pearls of wisdom to create sustainable online and face-to-face blended teaching programs, and decision-makers and influencers are provided with a number of ideas to consider for their own institutions.

The authors clearly state that each institution and respective departments have specific needs, so applying blanket policies will not, likely, be effective. They do, however, point out that there must be a continuous vision per institution overall, and they prove that institutions are not necessarily starting from scratch. The book moves, methodically, through processes of how to accomplish effective ends by beginning with advertising hybrids accurately. Classic advertising is part of the puzzle, but the registration system is part of the campaign, as well, by being precise when explaining course-level information. Further explanations on developing, supporting, and assessing hybrids in institutions reveal that there are certain models, policies, and procedures that are already in place on most campuses and can be borrowed to create vision continuity and a well-received hybrid curriculum. Field trips, internships, apprenticeships, and co-ops blending fully onsite learning experiences with applied knowledge in the real world are examples that demonstrate there is no need to recreate the wheel.

The authors' proposal is that hybrid teaching and support systems must be well thought out and collaborative to thrive. For instance, they believe hybrid teacher training should last for up to eight weeks and there should be a significant recognition upon completion of the detailed training (described in the book). In addition, there are recommendations on who should teach, how many should teach, and how to create fluid hybrid courses to increase student success and retention numbers, but achievement is connected to many other factors. A seamless scenario would include: academic counselors and advisors accurately assessing what students can succeed in hybrids; library research and support would include embedding a consistent librarian for hybrid students; online tutoring would be offered; dedicated IT support would include more than just emailing a help desk; and hybrid mentoring communities would be maintained. These support systems, and many other ideas and shared resources, are a part of an ongoing improvement plan that results in sustainable, quality hybrid course offerings.

Assuming that top-quality hybrid teaching material has been developed, there is clear vision, collaboration is high on all levels of a given institution, and many resources are dedicated to the insuring overall success, institutions still need to reach out to students to fulfill basic needs. According to a 2015 study cited in *Making Hybrids Work*, a major issue is that only 48% of those making less than \$25,000 per year have no broadband access. At the community college level, this would be the lion's share of the student population—the same student population who would benefit the most from hybrid course offerings. Meeting the needs of today's learners can be challenging, but it is not unusual to see students using their cell phones to take notes, to check grades and review syllabi, to do research, and even to write their APA- or MLA-formatted papers. Determined students do what they can to succeed, but they may need

additional resources to integrate mobile devices with learning management systems (Blackboard and others), which might include a pre-paid hot spot, for instance, that enables them to complete their online work.

*Making Hybrids Work: An Institutional Framework for Blending Online and Face-to-Face Instruction in Higher Education* strengths are the plethora of ideas and well thought out concepts to create successful hybrid course offerings. In addition, this book speaks to the big picture of creating a sustainable mode of teaching hybrids that can support a diverse student population. The overall weakness is, simply put, this can be hard to do; it won't happen overnight, and it is never final. As decision-makers comb through the book, a plan may need to be put in place on how to eat an elephant. Taking one bite at a time, decision-makers might explore certain concepts now and other concepts later. There will, likely, be ideas that will not work in certain institutions, but this book is a must read for those interested in well thought out strides to create online and face-to-face blended, hybrid teaching curricula.

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