

# A shifting approach to learning

Traditional curricula were created at a time when information was scarce and students relied on faculty members as a central source of wisdom. As the volume of accessible information has swelled through use of technology, students' needs and expectations have changed, as have faculty members' roles. If the university is to thrive, curricula must change, as well. The model below shows

core elements of the changes that are taking place at all levels of education. *No single approach fits all students, and most courses use a combination of these elements depending on the type of class, the needs of students and the philosophy of faculty members.* Clearly, though, courses must move toward an active and collaborative model if the university hopes to keep pace with today's students.

## More reliance on ...

- Lecture
- Homework assignments
- Tests and quizzes

Traditional

Contemporary

## More reliance on ...

- Collaborative work
- Tech-enhanced learning
- In-class activities to encourage analysis, synthesis, and application

## Engagement of students

<b>Emphasis on lecture;</b> students sit in rows and listen passively; they rarely engage one another	↔	<b>Emphasis on problem-solving, active feedback and discussion;</b> students work collaboratively in class
Little use of technology, except PowerPoint	<b>Most courses fall into a middle ground between these two approaches.</b>	Deliberate use of technology to aid student learning
Out-of-class time spent on homework exercises, memorization and studying for exams		Out-of-class time spent on acquisition of knowledge and preparation for face-to-face discussions and engagement

## Curriculum and assessment

<b>Individual control of courses,</b> including course content, learning goals, and materials; little communication among instructors	<b>Shared control of courses,</b> with teams of instructors pooling course materials and working toward common goals; regular communication among instructors
Curriculum based on assumed general principles and historically developed prerequisites; often little attention paid to how each course fits into the broad curriculum	Curriculum based on coordinated goals of the major or department, with awareness of how each course fits into the progression of the major or degree program
Primarily uses multiple-choice tests, similar forms of evaluation	More emphasis on activities such as writing, group projects, and open-ended assignments
Success determined primarily by student evaluations, normative distribution of grades, and DFW rates	Success determined by evidence of mastery of skills, as well as students' success in future courses, especially capstones