



New England College's Online College Experience Resembles Life On-Campus

When the coronavirus pandemic forced New England College to shift classes online, school officials focused on one primary goal: retaining the human element by bringing the campus experience and high levels of student support into the online environment. At [New England College](#), faculty found ways to keep students engaged through special virtual programs, Friday night hangouts, virtual games, and scavenger hunts.



Mike Taberski, vice president of student affairs at New England College, said when classes went online “student support also went virtual. Wellness counseling and other resources went online. This is not a computer running your class. These are real people, just like on campus. NEC tried to recreate the on-campus experience as much as possible.”

New England College is strongly positioned to excel in this area. [NEC online degree programs](#) have produced thousands of graduates throughout the years. In each program, school officials have focused on bringing the campus experience and student support to the online format.

Experience Offering Online Degrees

The approach taken by NEC mirrors the school's style of delivery with [all of its online programs](#), which reach thousands of students every year representing all 50 states and more than 75 countries.

Taberski credited the leadership of Wayne Lesperance Jr., the NEC vice president of academic affairs, with the school's ability to shift on-campus classes to the online environment so quickly. Lesperance said quickly establishing synchronous classes may have been a glimpse into the future that involves a “much more blended reality” of on-campus programs as well as synchronous and asynchronous online programs. Or, he added, students may “choose a little of each.”

Lesperance said the key to the school's success in offering courses online is maintaining strong support for students. School officials have built the online learning system by considering each aspect through the filter of diverse online student learning styles.

Interaction with instructors is another constant. “For NEC, the human element is important. We want to provide face-to-face instruction with an expert,” said Taberski.

NEC Looks to The Future of Online Learning

After the abrupt transition in the spring of 2020, NEC faculty and staff discussed future possibilities for online education with an eye on bringing the campus experience into the online learning environment. Adaptability emerged as the key.

Taberski said many factors go into assessing how well students adapt to an online environment. They include socioeconomic factors such as the availability of computers, reliable Wi-Fi, and designated, disruption-free spaces at home for students to study. Assessing those issues will help NEC learn how they can better support students with technology, laptops, and Wi-Fi accessibility.

He also said the 2020 experience allowed the school to find ways to bring more of the campus experience to students, including the ability to communicate one-on-one with professors and spend time, virtually, with other students. All this can “keep students engaged and happy,” Taberski said.

Lesperance said on-campus students might eventually have the option of having one day of online classes. He also said one future possibility for online student support is the addition of a mentoring program that “could expand to include how to be prepared for online learning.”

While adding that “we don't know how this will play out or integrate in the future,” Lesperance said all NEC leaders and faculty continue to focus on improving an already high-quality online class environment while maintaining the school's strong educational tradition and student support.