Jeff Hale

I enjoy teaching Ecampus classes because of the experience that it brings to me as well as to the students. I’m able to get in touch with students that are all over the country, and in fact all over the world and they bring different experiences to the classroom. The students that are in my distance courses are mature; they’re ready, active learners. Of course they are balancing many other aspects of their lives. Sometimes children, jobs, other types of professional careers but they are really engaged learners. I think what’s most important about distance education is that we’re able to replicate, it in many ways, the on-campus classroom experience. But what we are able to do is to provide students that are taking distance courses with an equivalent experience. For example I do discussion groups in my classes; while online I’m also able to do discussion groups. Only what I find is that more and more students are able to express themselves in deeply thoughtful ways. They are able to engage each other in provocative conversations that would just never happen in a face to face classroom. I’m thankful for what they’ve brought to the discussion. They also have real life experiences to bring to those discussions and that makes them much livelier. Part of what I get out of distance course work is that students have actual experiences in their own communities that they can share. Instead of local students going out and surveying local non-profit organizations, in my case, about what’s happening in Corvallis students are bringing experiences from literally all over the world. Students get better feedback from me I think in a distance environment than I do in class. I teach the same class on-campus and off-campus and what I’m finding is that students who are in my distance course send me materials in an electronic format. I’m able to grade those materials electronically and instead of taking the time to write extensive descriptions every time I’m trying to give feedback to a student. I can give cut and paste jobs and give a lot more feedback to many more students through a distance environment. In fact I’m even going to probably adopt that approach for my on-campus courses. That’s an important point too, I think that I have learned a lot from the distance course and now apply in the on-campus environment. For example we had a discussion related to gender issues that really could only have evolved using discussion boards through the distance course. I’m going to now use a discussion board in my on-campus class in order to break away from the gender stereotypes that are in the classroom and give people the freedom to express themselves. I think that this is going to be an exciting addition to my on-campus course.